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**THE LIFE OF  
SIR AGLOVALE DE GALIS**







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THE LIFE OF  
SIR AGLOVALE DE GALIS

BY  
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TO

ROBERT HOLDEN HOUSMAN

*"Thanks be to God for my good brother, who has blessed this  
life of mine."—C.H.*

**W**HEN a man truly perceiveth and considereth himself who and what he is, and findeth himself utterly vile and wicked and unworthy, he falleth into such a deep abasement that it seemeth to him reasonable that all creatures in heaven and earth should rise up against him. And therefore he will not and dare not desire any consolation and release, but he is willing to be unconsolated and unreleased; and he doth not grieve over his sufferings, for they are right in his eyes, and he hath nothing to say against them. This is what is meant by true repentance for sin, and he who in this present time entereth into this hell, none may console him. Now, God hath not forsaken a man in this hell, but He is laying His hand upon him that the man may not desire nor regard anything but the Eternal Good only. And then, when the man neither careth nor desireth anything but the Eternal Good alone, and seeketh not himself nor his own things, but the honour of God only, he is made a partaker of all manner of joy, bliss, grace, rest, and consolation, and so the man is henceforth in the kingdom of heaven. This hell and this heaven are two good safe ways for a man, and happy is he who truly findeth them.”  
—*Theologia Germanica.*



# THE LIFE OF SIR AGLOVALE DE GALIS

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## CHAPTER I

**T**HE first record of Aglovale shows him in boyhood tilting among others with his younger brother Lamorak.

Under conduct of old squires the boys trained on the castle green, watched from above by fair, kind critics, damsels and dames, one a queen. Aglovale, then in early teens, held his own with sufficient address among his fellows to take the lead that was fitting his birth. Young Lamorak in due time hurled against him; and Aglovale, the elder by a year, the taller by a head, went shocked over his horse's tail. Loud sprang cheers from the rest, and on high white hands fluttered applause.

When later the boys ranked for the mellay, King Pellinore, with an honoured guest, young King Arthur, came out to watch, and the Queen, descending, stood with them under the gateway. Throughout the tough game the names of the rival brothers were calling. "Lamorak, Lamorak," rang like the beat of steel; less strong for a rallying cry tossed the name of Aglovale.

Behind his leader, little Durnor rollicked along heedless of danger, was rescued by Aglovale, was spared by Lamorak, till he and his cob tumbled perilously, and he was led away perforce, despite his valiant laughter and tears.

Fortune went with Lamorak, for his emulation was a contagious ardour; while Aglovale, nervous and dour, did little to stay defeat.



Then the Queen, proud of her dearest son Lamorak, told how he had forejusted his elder; thereupon King Pellinore, well pleased also, called the pair out to run a course before King Arthur.

"You are fit enough, boys?"

"Yes, yes, sire!" shouted Lamorak, passing fain and eager.

Aglovale said nothing; he was badly bruised, but he would not plead. So matched with his younger he could get no credit, Lamorak could get no shame. Deep, then, bit the snake that poisoned his life thereafter. He set his teeth and wheeled for position. "Lamorak, Lamorak," hammered heavy on his heart, and his own name scarcely could he hear as their young fellows shouted.

Down went Lamorak. No fault was his, for his girths were rotten and broke. He rose fierce and clamorous, and sprang to the first horse that offered, eager to dispute his brother's nominal advantage. Aglovale claimed none. "Though a back should break," swore Lamorak, "'tis not I shall quit the saddle." Again they ran; and Aglovale, the elder by a year, the taller by a head, went shocked over his horse's tail. How "Lamorak, Lamorak" rang!

Away pranced the gallant boy; he saluted the Kings, the Queen; he flung off and sprang up to the mother, bareheaded for her kiss.

Aglovale stood up mute as death, came on foot, leading his horse, saluted, and passed. Arthur spoke kindly, commending both. The Queen looked after her son with tardy compunction, and when she saw him standing apart, stepped down and crossed to him over the green, pacing slow with folded arms; for in those days she went heavily with a double burden that proved to be Percivale and his sister Saint.

"Are you hurt, my son?"

He lied, saying, "No."

Her kind, grave eyes questioned his sombre countenance.

"By this is a noble knight shown: that he rises with no rancour from a fair overthrow; that he admires the force that can bring him down; that he knows no base envy."

Aglovale breathed patiently. He dared not out with another word lest the shame of weeping should attend. In his heart he cried, "Does he love you more than I, that you should love him more than me?"

"Ah, Aglovale," said the Queen, wistfully, "a degree of excellence you might have brought from the ground, though Lamorak from the selle brought more. Then had I been a happier mother and proud of both my sons."

Aglovale quivered and hung his head silent; and she turned away sighing over his evil temper. From the incoherent conscience of youth he could not declare how the intolerable bitterness of overthrow lay in her balancing his loss so lightly against Lamorak's gain.

Yet then and afterwards, for all the Devil did with Aglovale, never could he kindle in him the least spark of hatred against his brother Lamorak.

On a day not long after, the Queen sent for Aglovale to her chamber, and showed him, pacing the court below, King Pellinore and a stranger, whose hand rested on his shoulder, whose face was addressed to him as the moon's to her earth, whose voice and laughter rang the tune of close and familiar friendship.

"That is Sir Griflet le Fise de Dieu, a good knight that I would you should love and honour."

Then with her arm round the boy's neck she told how that friendship sprang: young Sir Griflet, on the first day of knight-hood, sought to win worship of King Pellinore, who first refused him, warning him of his might; and when he would not be stayed, lightly smote him down; and then the King took him up nigh slain, gave him wind, and set him on his horse again, commending him for his great heart. And thereafter, she said, Sir Griflet loved and worshipped him greatly.

Aglovale sighed against her heart. He understood; and he willed to love and worship Sir Griflet.

That good Queen did not herself fail to be gracious and generous when within her woman's sphere she was tried. From the wedding of Arthur and Guenever, King Pellinore

returned with a goodly young knight, his new-found son Tor, the love-child he to a peasant girl had given, and she to her man Aries the cowherd, eighteen years before. Here may not enter the full tale of how noble blood sent Tor from the low estate of his mother, with a bold request straight to the presence of his unguessed father; and how Arthur gave him knighthood before his own nephew Gawaine, and was justified straightway by his noble deeds, while Gawaine fell to disgrace. All this is written in the books of my most dear Master whom I love so much.

The Queen, large-hearted, greeted her lord's son sweetly, fairly, without misgiving for his peasant mother. She found for him room in her good grace next her own sons, aye, in the end above one, and he her firstborn; for Tor had touches of his father, was gentle, courteous, of good parts, passing true of his promise; and he never did outrage.

Aglovale's likeness to his father was but in strong hawk features and swarthy skin. The stately build inherited by Tor was not to be his; manhood could hardly redeem the lank and awkward sprouting of his youth. Lamorak, in the bloom of boyish grace, precluded the man of perfect strength and beauty, whose fine force and prowess ranked him equal with great Launcelot, and Tristram biggest of Arthur's knights.

Still, as the boys grew Lamorak gained over Aglovale; and Tor—the strong, admirable Tor himself—freely owned that the day would soon come when he, too, would be bettered of his brother; and Pellinore of himself said the same in his heart.

From their blunt play the boys went early to the sharp work of battle. When Danes and Irish landed in hosts against Arthur and ravaged from North Wales, Pellinore, staying for larger levies, sent on Tor with a troop of his best knights; and Aglovale and Lamorak, as young squires, attended on their bastard brother.

A horrid foretaste they had when by night the active Irish rushed the unwary camp where in the midst lay Guenever withal. From shrouds of destruction Tor cut them out,



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and with him they headed a desperate stand to bar the way that the Queen had gone, with but four to defend her : Arthur, Kay the foster brother, Gawaine, and Griflet.

Step by step, stubborn Tor and his poor few gave back before heavy odds, till the night went blind, and broken and dispersed through the forest they fought or fled. Aglovale and Lamorak held together, swept away from Tor's voice by a surge of rattling steel. Joining in breathless rallies that scattered again with loss, wounded, horsed, and unhorsed, spent with the weight of harness, through that dreadful night they endured a dark, inglorious struggle.

About dawn as they fell into a broad greenway, a foul knight came by who spurred upon Aglovale. His weary arm beat down the spear ; it missed his side, pierced his thigh clean through, bore him to earth and broke. Then Lamorak, savage, houghed the horse without scruple, and stood before his brother in stout defence. Aglovale on his knees fought too. Down the greenway came the tramp of riders whose call was "Stranggore," and some spurred forward to the boys at bay. Aglovale called for rescue, but Lamorak cried, "Let be, let be ! I will deal in full payment." And even as he spoke, with a stroke deep through the gorget, he ended his work.

Fresh come at need here rode King Bagdemagus and his knights of Stranggore, with news of Pellinore following up from the south ; with news of Tor whose driven foes they circled to head ; but of Guenever and her four without news. By him the sons of Pellinore were not left horseless to foul murderers of the wounded ; though scarcely might Aglovale ride for his hurt wherein the truncheon stack. To stay him from a fall a young squire of his age came to ride on the one side, as Lamorak rode on the other : this was Meliagraunce, son to King Bagdemagus.

On they rode under sky-dawn for the edge of the forest. And as the broad Humber opened ahead, flashing to the tide's uprush, helms golden in the first sun moved forward down a silver glade. Here shone lost Arthur and his fellows with a

gathering troop; he, Gawaine, and Griflet each bore token of a king he had slain, while Kay bore two.

Forth into the open swung the joint force, and lo! on Humber's tide far out steered a dark blot, where Guenever went safe on a ferry barge; and on Humber's bank glittered the thousands of the Danes and their allies, rank on rank, well ordered, pricking forward.

"Can our hundreds face these?" said Bagdemagus.

"Aye," answered Arthur, "for see, now they find their dead."

Even Guenever, far off, must have heard and shuddered at the dreadful cry of rage and lamentation that went up from the desolated hosts; and close after may have heard, too, the first great crash of battle; for while yet the foe reeled and surged and thronged, Arthur bore down upon them and began to slay.

In that battle Aglovale had no part. Lamorak shot away to the charge, and he was following insanely when Griflet saw him, reeling, loose-reined, clinging to the saddle peak. He cursed him roundly for a fool, guided him clear of the rush, brought him to a stand, and bade him go back. Where Griflet left him he stayed, nor went back nor forward.

The heart of Denmark was broken for its king; and Tor drove in on the rear the shattered strength of Ireland; and the allies, men of the Vale and of Soleise, between the Humber and backward pressure, turned frantic and fought friend and foe alike. That day there was fearful slaughter of the dense hosts of the invaders.

After the field was won, Tor found his brother fainting on his horse's neck. Weeping for joy, he lifted him down and cared for him; from the stiffened wound he drew out the spear head, and staunched the fresh blood that sprang free, comforting, praising, regarding naught else, refusing to leave him until Arthur summoned.

Then Aglovale, looking after, saw not far off King Arthur and his knights gathered red from the field; and Queen Guenever was come again and stood near between Kay and



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Gawaine. Fair gold was her hair. Fair gold was the hair of his mother, Pellinore's queen.

The King stood there with his sword bare in his hand to give knighthood. Aglovale sprang to his feet: the first to come and kneel was young Lamorak. More he could not stand to see. His wound broke out streaming afresh; for pure envy also his nostrils gushed blood; so fierce, then, was the stress of the master passion of his youth.

After Lamorak came Gawaine's two brothers, Gaheris and Agravaire, and many another; among the rest, Meliagraunce. And when the last stood up a knight, Arthur questioned after one more. Tor answered him; Lamorak, Bagdemagus, Griflet answered him.

Across the greensward ran Tor; in all his harness he ran. He lifted Aglovale.

"I cannot stand or go," said the boy, feebly.

"You shall! Aglovale, it is for knighthood of King Arthur!"

He drew his young brother's arm round his neck and lifted him along. Lamorak came too, and between them they took him and helped him to his knees before Arthur. Excalibur touched his shoulder, and his famishing spirit was satisfied.

Tor set him on his feet. "Keep up," said Lamorak, low, "for we go before Queen Guenever."

"Keep up," said Tor, low, "for we pass by Sir Gawaine and his brethren."

Sweet salutation the fairest of women gave, and gracious thanks to each, and praise namely to Sir Tor. Fair gold was her hair. On Lamorak her eyes rested, because of his boyish grace and beauty. She said in her heart, and afterwards to Arthur, "An angel, a man, and a devil."

"A man indeed," said Arthur, "but no devil, and on my faith no angel. Good knights all they will prove."

Gawaine and his brethren eyed hard the sons of Pellinore, for blood feud was unfinished, and these sons of Lot were passing good haters. Gawaine and Tor saluted coldly. Yet sooth that day had cancelled an old misdeed recorded in the books of him I love so much, restoring to Gawaine the fair place long

withheld him in Queen Guenever's regard. Let it be said of him that then, and always, faithful and blameless was his worship of Arthur's queen; and for the oath she had imposed on him in his day of disgrace ever was he gentle and courteous to all ladies, and to all men who asked he showed mercy. The blood of Pellinore would ask none of him; nor would Dinadan, nor Bagdemagus.

One envied Aglovale. Said Meliagraunce, "For your night of defence, Sir Aglovale, would I give my day of onslaught; for to me dearer than knighthood were such fair and particular greeting from Queen Guenever."

Aglovale wondered, and liked the youth, nor thought ill of the words. Alas! he so speaking was at first dawn of a passion that afterwards drove him to rape and treason, and brought him to so evil an end that Guenever denied him life and Arthur begrudged him burial.

Fuller reward awaited Sir Tor at Camelot; he, Gawaine, Griflet, and Kay were chosen in place of knights of the Round Table fallen by the Humber. My most dear Master has told at length how the vacant sieges were filled; and also of the strict fairness of Pellinore, and of the resentment of King Bagdemagus. Of Aglovale in boyhood there is no more to tell.



## CHAPTER II

**T**OR, the firstborn of King Pellinore, came to be the best beloved of all his sons. Sown in the waste, left to grow untended, he, in the flower of youth, approved the father generously, nor brought him any reproach for long neglect. Well might joy and pride in the heart of Pellinore rise up to claim him, and love swell stronger by delay. So, too, in other fathers sprang a like devotion at sight of their stranger sons : in Bors when he took White Helin ; in Launcelot when Galahad came. The names of three other sons stand in dark contrast, three who forfeited their fathers' love, and carried curses : Aglovale, son to King Pellinore ; Meliagraunce, son to King Bagdemagus ; Mordred, son and nephew to King Arthur.

Yet even in early blameless years Aglovale, the heir, came to know that his father for Tor's sake, and his mother for Lamorak's sake, begrudged him his birthright. He knew, too, that Tor felt with the Queen, Lamorak with the King. As for Durnor, he held Durnor of slight account—Durnor !

Howbeit at that time all four brethren were named for high promise, approved of tried knights, well esteemed of their young fellows. And later, spite of all defect, three houses won to matchless fame in Logris : Arthur with his nephews, Launcelot with his brethren, Pellinore with his sons.

Rot at the core showed suddenly in Aglovale. Great justs were held at Cardiff in the presence of Arthur and his Queen, what time he bestowed an earldom upon Sir Tor, then of full age. There Tor won the degree on the first day ; and on the



second day Lamorak won it ; and on the third day a strange knight came in, who smote down Aglovale and Durnor and many more and won the degree : his name, Sir Bagdemagus, King of Stranggore. Then Aglovale plucked up his horse and rode straight away north. Darkness covers here the ways he went.

Days went by, and weeks, and months, without any tidings, good or ill. With the new year came King Bagdemagus again, seeking after his lost son Meliagraunce. Sir Aglovale, he said, had come into Stranggore when justs were holding, and there he had smitten down Sir Agravaine and many others ; and so brim and merry was he, that his son Meliagraunce would fellowship with him, and had gone in his company leaving no trace.

More days, weeks, months, went by. Lamorak and Durnor went and came, Tor came and went and came again, but Aglovale did not come.

From the Marches of Northgalis blew rumour of evil deeds : of lands harried, travellers and pilgrims robbed, knights murdered, and ladies misused. My most dear Master tells how there, at a later day, foul love and foul war prevailed, until Sir Launcelot came to make an end of Sir Turquine the murderer, and Sir Peris the ravisher.

A riding damsel came through Cardiff, a fair, fierce, reckless creature, who, though young she was, had led an adventurous life, with easy love and deadly hate, revel and hardship, quick laughter and desperate cries, some soft memory enshrined, and some hot malice unspent. Out of such a store she could weave many marvellous tales of adventure, never two alike. She, too, spoke ill of the Marches, and told of the infamous practice of two whom she named the Savage and the Sinister ; how unfairly and barbarously they had slain a noble young knight ; and how unfairly and barbarously they would have used his damsel, but that she wisely and wittily feigned and played to set them one against the other, till they fell to fighting, and she by good fortune escaped them both.

With touches of art she embellished her tale, yet her voice and eye showed that for once something was suppressed, and



that this adventure was more near herself than others of which she feigned.

When she departed Durnor ran after. "Why called you that one Sinister?"

"He fought left-handed," she answered.

It was a trick that Aglovale practised.

Durnor went back, armed, and took horse. As he rode out Tor and Lamorak met him and questioned.

"I go to look up brother Sir Aglovale," he said carelessly, and passed.

The two looked at each other.

"I shall follow," said Tor.

"I also," said Lamorak.

So they armed quickly, took horse, and went after Durnor.

Northward the three rode together. And many days they spent questing through the Waste Lands, and the Marches of Northgalis and Gore, at that time the most lawless wilds in Logris, for there two wanton queens fostered misrule out of hatred and treason to King Arthur. Some robber knights they fought and slew by the way, but neither Sir Peris nor Sir Turquine did they chance to meet.

They came at last upon one who was pitilessly robbing a gentlewoman of her fair young daughter. Lightly he set down his prize at Lamorak's challenge, rode against him full knightly, broke a spear and got a fall. Up he rose, pulled out his sword, and caught it in the left hand. He saw that the three bore the arms of Galis, and turned to flee. They hemmed him in, all but sure of him.

Lamorak sprang down. "I require you of your knighthood to tell me your name?" He would not, and struck. "Stay your hand," said Lamorak, "till I be better appointed." His shield he cast aside; he plucked off also gorget and helm and cast them down. With naught to defend his head but his sword, he advanced, and struck, and struck again.

So like St. George he looked that a very stranger might have faltered, loth to strike upon that bright head. Aglovale sobbed, flung away his sword, and to Lamorak's distress kneeled

and Tor and Lamorak were as right hand and left to him in their loyal support, gladly admitting his right and worth. His was not brilliant work and fortunate, like Sir Gawaine's, whose star ascendant at that time outshone all others; but what he did King Arthur marked well and approved, for he, the great leader, could best of all appraise the young knight's sound instinct in methods of war. So when the year closed on him victorious at Rome, crowned Emperor by the Pope, when he summoned his Round Table there and filled up the sieges, Sir Aglovale de Galis was duly called and placed.

Knights of highest worship sat hard by the Siege Perilous that awaited the coming of the best knight in the world. To the right of it sat King Pellinore, then Sir Lamorak, then Sir Marhaus, the best knight of Ireland; to the left sat Sir Bors the Good, with Sir Launcelot and his brother Sir Ector; Sir Tor was not far, with Sir Gawaine for his opposite. Distant by many degrees from that zenith, Sir Aglovale had his place, for dearer to Arthur was the stout heart and arm than the good head. And the mind of Aglovale inclined the same way; he would gladly abandon all the credit won in command, but once to have in his ears such a roar of welcome and acclaim as rose from fighting ranks when Lamorak rode in.

On that high day Durnor, riding behind his brothers, saw a hard-featured man thrust through the crowd and catch at Sir Aglovale's knee, calling him by a strange name. Aglovale struck his hand aside, tossed him a piece of gold, and passed. The man, a seafarer by his dress, fell back and plucked at a Welshman with a question; Aglovale, with a stony countenance, rode on ignoring salutations. His day was darkly overcast. Durnor was ashamed to watch or to question; he went on wondering.

At the day's end the same stranger entered as a suitor before King Pellinore and his sons, and got leave to speak.

"My lord Sir Aglovale," he said, "is it sooth that to-day, for the honour of the Round Table, you will grant any man his suit except it be unreasonable?"

Aglovale eyed him sternly and answered, "Aye."



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"Then, my lord, I desire and pray that you take me to serve you."

An angry red mounted to Aglovale's brow. The stranger spoke on hurriedly.

"I ask to be no more than your groom, your henchman, your varlet, albeit I am not more meanly born than some who are squires. And I will promise you very faithful service for the sake of one I shall never meet again, because, my lord Sir Aglovale, of the resemblance you bear him."

Said Durnor, whose tongue was more ready than his wits, "Hey, brother, you knew him not, and he mistook you!"

Said the stranger quickly, with his eyes still on Sir Aglovale, "Before to-day never has my lord your brother set eyes on me."

Aglovale strode forward and struck him on the mouth. "Brose, you lie!" he said.

Confounded stood the suitor, savage but cowed. He got his voice, and said thickly, "My lord, if I live you shall repent of this."

Said Aglovale, wickedly, "Get you gone, would you go to hell in your own time."

Said Brose, "At your heels, my lord, will be time enough for me."

King Pellinore spoke, seeing Aglovale finger at his sword. "Fair son, he stands a suitor on your honour to-day." And at that his son ground his teeth and laughed harshly.

Said the King to Brose, "By my counsel you and your suit withdraw."

The man spoke up resolutely, though his hard-favoured countenance twitched.

"Truly sir, my lord your son may hold my suit unreasonable, since he does not please to forget that when he saw me before, for my sins I was a galley-slave."

Still, as he spoke he kept his eyes upon Sir Aglovale, who turned his to watch his father's face. Both drew the breath of hard conflict.

"And yet is my suit not unreasonable, since who would

serve him more truly and faithfully than one he delivered out of that hell."

"Hear, you dog!" cried Aglovale, in a black rage, "for the honour of the day and because of my word you shall have your asking. But, by God!" he added through his teeth, "you shall sweat for it hereafter."

Again King Pellinore warned Brose off his dangerous ground, guessing heavily at ugly concerns behind his son's truculence.

"His man am I," came the answer, "at what service and what wage he wills. He knows I am able enough. I was the first he made free. Me he set to loose Christians while he went killing Saracens; and not one was left alive; and it was a great galley; and we, slaves with our chains, were all my lord Sir Aglovale had to back him. Moreover, he stood to fight unarmed, and so fought and won."

Aglovale cursed and flung out his sword, beside himself with rage. His brothers by force stayed him, and got Brose away and stowed safe till that madness should be past.

Be it known forthwith that master and man kept each his word. Aglovale stinted not by harsh and brutal usage to tempt the man to his worst; and Brose endured, steadily and patiently biding his time to be approved, until his master recognized with wonder that this dog was the faithfulest of his kind, following him out of real devotion. Straight he acknowledged, "Brose, I do repent," and never thenceforth had a doubt of him till came the time of double parting when broke the unhappy heart of Aglovale. Brose, in an after day, when, as shall be told, he followed Percivale, professed what secret virtue in his master had drawn him to allegiance. "Never have I heard him complain," he said. No man, save Nacien the Hermit, did ever so truly as Brose read the worth of that distorted nature at its worst.

Now, as to the conclusion of this passage, had Aglovale chosen to hold his peace, the truth might not have come to light, for Brose told no more, refusing to answer any question but in his master's presence; and, drunk or sober, he never



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let loose his tongue till the end came. But Aglovale, when his brothers turned to him with new worship, and his father with kind reproach, because he had despised the approval of their love, felt his load more heavy to bear than any deserved disgrace. So, as they would not cease and let him go, "I was one of them," said he; "I, too, was a galley-slave."

That was not enough, though his voice and his face were frightful. So gross an outrage to him but moved their common blood with indignation.

Said Lamorak under his breath, "I rather would have died."

Aglovale heard. "I, too," he said, "even as due by a halter."

Durnor gaped and gasped, "As due!" Aghast stared King Pellinore and Tor and Lamorak. His few words were enough to set their guesses; and he watched the leap and run, the pause and flow of apprehension in their looks. Now they knew why he at one time, before they came to Rome, had avoided the coast; there at Genoa their eyes had seen rotten bodies dangling above the tide-mark; they had heard tell of a well-dreaded corsair barque, decoyed and betrayed there by means of a Saracen emir. Yes, they knew; only Durnor did not understand. Durnor was a dense fool.

King Pellinore broke silence. "And yet you live!"

His unworthy son came to him, followed after him, kneeled to him, and held his knees in mute entreaty.

"You felon proclaimed! Why had you not your dues?"

"Pardon, sire, because there is that in me that is due to you."

King Pellinore cut him short with a heavy curse, and in his passion turned and struck the woeful mask that was his living disgrace.

"Oh, you lie—you lie!" he cried.

At that Aglovale stood up and pulled out his sword; taking it by the point, he presented the hilts to King Pellinore.

"Prove that upon my body, sire, an you please," he said desperately.

The King gripped with a will.

"Stand aside, Sir Tor," cried Aglovale; "as for this matter you shall not come between me and my father."

But Tor said, "Ah, sire, are all the good strokes of that sword clean gone from remembrance?"

"Answer! Why had you not your dues?"

He writhed and faltered. "I was not so well worth a halter as some others; and—and I was valued to ransom as a king's son."

"Ah, wretched blabber!"

Again Tor came between. "Speak again, brother—say you never acknowledged your birth!"

"Yes, bastard, I did. I acknowledged my birth, unawares, even as you did among your mother-brethren. Ah, sire, pardon me that at least!"

"What more have you to tell, felon?"

"Sire," said Aglovale, "boots it to know more of what I did, or what others did with this sinful body of mine, since my name and my lineage went not with it?"

"Unhappy fool! Does not your rascal fellow know you?"

Aglovale answered knightly, "My fellows now are knights of the Round Table; and excepting you, sire, and my fair brothers, and my lord King Arthur, none of them that bear life shall charge disworship against my name and lineage but I will prove upon his body that he lies."

King Pellinore went up and down thinking a great while. Then he put back Aglovale's sword into his hands and said heavily, "See you fail not. When your gallows deeds be known, or keep you body alive in the Devil's name—or God have mercy on your soul!"

In this he reckoned amiss, for Brose proved close and sure, and Aglovale lived longer than the devil in him, and died the last of his mother's sons.

Now, it is recorded that after these wars with Rome, Pellinore set his son Aglovale as warden at Cardigan. Maybe this in a manner was banishment till he should have earned full forgiveness, although later the lordship of Cardigan is called



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his appanage. Here Aglovale sped ill; for, after a turn of staid and strict government, he fell to ways of misrule. For a brief space he made a fine show of it, merry and brim in living and fighting. He lured Durnor to him, and despised him that he came. Many drew to him at that time; and any who had earned the King's displeasure could find with him countenance and welcome. So, though riot and misrule were doubtless all his sins, he gave large cause for the count of treason.

After remonstrance and a threat, King Pellinore made short work. He rode in on surprise with a great plump of spears, and Aglovale, surrendering without a stroke, was deprived of land and rule, and imprisoned with undue rigour.

He never complained, for, indeed, the odd good in him lent him a patience and submission rare to find among wrongdoers. The intercession of his mother and his brethren, and namely of Sir Tor, restored him to freedom and grace.

But too soon his better self went to the winds as before. This time Lamorak was partly to blame. The words he used enter here not indeed in time and place as recorded by my most dear Master, who for his part kept not strictly to the order of events, as can be shown on his telling of the justs at Avilion and at Kinkenadon by the Sands.

Justs were called beside the Isle of Avilion for the proving of Arthur's young nephew Gareth, then newly sprung from the scullery into sudden fame and the well-earned love of his lady Liones. Thither came his mother, Morgause, Queen of Orkney, still with her fatal beauty as keen as when Arthur, her unknown brother, wooed her to guilty love. On Lamorak she looked, and Lamorak looked on her, and for their bane love sprang.

Marvellous deeds of arms Lamorak did that day, out of measure fain to win worship before her. Fighting was like a revel to him, till in the midst of his ecstasy he chanced to see his two brothers, Aglovale and Durnor, overthrown. That turned him to rage; four knights went down to his spear; more to his sword; others fled. Aglovale and Durnor he horsed again, but in his heat he did not spare them words.



Shame on them! cried Lamorak, to fall so off their horses. Knights that were knights indeed, he said, should fight on horseback; fighting afoot, he said, was but meant for spoilers and felons. So he spoke heedless in his heat. "Sit fast upon your horses," he cried at parting, "or else fight never more afore me."

Durnor emptied language and protest after him; but as for Aglovale, his blood rose and broke forth, so that it ran from the ventails of his helm and he had to lift the vizard.

"How, brother," said Durnor, "fell you so hard?" But when he viewed a face pallid and hard-set, even he could read and understand.

"Nay, nay," he said in clumsy kindness, "Aglovale, he never meant it so! Oh, he had clean forgot all that, or never had he spoken so!"

"By your leave, fair brother," returned Aglovale, "I can hear as I list; and, if I list, gainsay."

Durnor looked after him as starkly he rode into the fray. "When he goes to work with his lips white, he kills. Now God have mercy on some man's soul."

His cast was true enough. Aglovale that day was curst and forebore none. After that he was lost again for many a day, and with him Brose.

Tidings came of him returned and dwelling at Cardigan. Thither rode Tor and Durnor, and bore back good report of him, as they found him sober, just, wise, and knightly in all ways. But Tor owed to King Pellinore that their welcome had not been brotherly, Sir Aglovale, cold and reserved, showing with a manner of precise courtesy a mind inclined to quarrel. Durnor laughed and made excuse, in that he was assotted on a passing fair wench, and an exigent. So had he mistaken sweet Gilleis, Aglovale's last and only true love.

When King Pellinore afterwards passed to Cardigan, Aglovale had flown, none knew whither, and sweet Gilleis lay in the tomb.



### CHAPTER III

**N**ACIEN the Hermit, gathering worts high up on Wenlock Edge, saw a knight come riding below, followed far behind by one afoot, running, stooping, shunning the open. Over rough and smooth rode the knight spurring hard. The jaded horse stumbling on broken ground, fell and did not rise; whereat suddenly he pulled out his sword, and rove that good beast through the body. Forward on his feet he started in a hasty aimless fashion; his shield he flung away, then his helm; piece by piece he stripped off his harness, and cast it from him.

"Now see I," said Nacien, "that a fiend rides him." And he went down to meet him till the sound of groaning came to his ears and words of blasphemy. The secret follower came nearer, saw the old man ahead, and stood up with a gesture of warning. Right so the knight caught sight of him.

Brose turned to flee, for Aglovale made fiercely after him with his sword drawn. Brief was the chase: Brose missed footing, fell, rose up lamed, faced round on his master, and held up entreating hands. In vain: deep into his side bit the relentless sword. For a moment Aglovale looked on the fallen man, then his reddened blade he flung afar, and kneeling he tried to staunch the bleeding life.

"It was foully done," said Nacien. "Go you, murderer, and bring water." And Aglovale went like a bidden child.

Even with that first look on the two men Nacien knew that his work lay rather with the soul of the one than the body of the other.

But for Aglovale he could do nothing till Brose had taken good hold of life. Neither day nor night would that unhappy master quit his man; scarcely would he speak or eat, and sleep he did not till on the third night Nacien beguiled him with a drink.

Then said Brose weakly, "For the love of God help my master lest he die of his shut heart." And when Nacien commended his devotion so evilly rewarded: "Nay," said Brose, "he had threatened and I had promised. In following I broke my word; his my master kept."

But of counsel and consolation Aglovale took as little heed as of admonition and rebuke, till the day came when Nacien told him Brose was sure of recovery. Then he was moved to blessings and thankings and promises for gratitude, and the good man, seeing his time, with grave authority called on him to confess his sins.

Aglovale looked at him darkly. "I want no absolution," he said.

"My son," said Nacien, "I bid you to penance in confession."

"Yea, that I want," said Aglovale, after long silence.

"In the name of God!" said Nacien.

Aglovale did not kneel. He stood up and bore the light of day and Nacien's eyes through all. His tongue failed him at first. "Gilleis!" he said, and stopped dumb, struggling.

"In the name of God!" repeated Nacien.

Once more the wretched man said "Gilleis!" And further, "Her I did not ravish.

"Two men knocked at midnight and asked her pity on one sore wounded; and she being a lone maid feared to unbar. Yet because of their need and the bitter frost, and because they swore steadily her maidenhood should get no hurt, her pity was so wrought upon that she gave them entrance. And she did also all service she could for him wounded; for he asked her to ransack his wounds in knee and breast. So first she unbound his knee and salved and dressed it, and greatly he complained the while of the wound in his breast. So very



softly she handled the bindings; but as she drew off the last fold there was no blood, and on the breast uncovered there was no wound. Whole he was but for a prick in the knee. Like a bird she went to the door as Brose shot in the outside bolts. She stood and put her hands over her face, and I watched her and never stirred. And after a while she said, Why had I done so? I said, for want of her pity on the great wound in my breast, and greatly I complained.

“She had eyes like a heifer’s that could not show anger. Her hair was wheat-brown. Her skin was like lime blossom, and as sweet was the scent she gave. God never made woman-flesh more quick and tender to the influence of man. Though I never touched her I troubled her, and she writhed and drew her mantle around.

“She put me in mind of my oaths, and I said until they were broken I was not forsworn. Yet she lamented for her good name; and then I reached out my sword to her, and bade her make it good on me if she chose. Yet I played with her then, knowing that she could not. And when she put the pommel between her feet and felt the point with her hands, I laughed, knowing this also she could not do. And at that she wept, and her tears—Gilleis—even for her tears I never stirred. But she had to hear, and she could not hide.

“So I told her how, lying hurt, I had looked down from a window, and had seen her kiss given to a tall squire, as never had a kiss been given to me. And I told her how I would have had her by force, had I loved her but as I had loved others. She answered that her squire was now a knight; and was I so base, she said, as to shun knightly contest, when she doubted not he would prove upon me that he was the better man of his hands. I said I had done enough with woman on the grave of lord or lover to know that not so ever would sweet kindness freely given touch my lips; that way came only light love or heavy curses. I said I could not boast to be better of my hands than he, as I had not tried him. Yea, he had good looks for her eye, a good name for her ear, while I was swart and halt, and I was he called Sinister. But he had

no force to love her as I loved ; and I would for one night so possess her eye and her ear that she could not choose but know I loved her better than he. And that was true. She looked at me and covered her face and held her peace. Though by falsity I won her, that was true.

“She had to hear, and she could not hide. But in the end I grew ashamed and repented ; and before dawn I confessed all : how her solitude that night had been contrived by force and fraud ; and how by means of Brose I had ensured that my going should be spied to defame her ; and how I hoped after to carry on the game. But I told her that now the bolts had been long withdrawn, and while dawn was far I would take myself away to prevent my own mischief. ‘God amend all,’ said Gilleis, as I went.

“Now when I issued to the night all the world was white with snow. Then I hardened my heart as I left my tracks upon it. And the skies had no ruth. At dawn a boatman found me fallen, and lifted me down to the river ; and I left amends to God and went with the stream.

“Her knight, Sir Berel, lay in Ireland held at ransom. A poor man he was, and Gilleis la Orpheline, in ward of an old knight his father, had been living meanly to buy him free. Now when after many days Brose traced me out, he brought word how my footprints had undone her, for her tale was incredible to the old man, and he cursed her for his son and departed. And soon after he died. I turned again, and vowed to her I would do anything she should require. She was so gentle I never heard a hard word, but then she did require a hard penance. For slander she cared little, except at the ears of the two most dear to her, of whom one was now dead ; and her request was that I should pass to Ireland, and acknowledge my treason to her knight under oath, and abide by his ruling. I said this was not according to the course of knightly usage. She urged no further and asked no more, so I swore to it and went.

“Methought as I went I heard devils laughing at what should come ; but lo ! when I had told him all, he believed



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me ! Knowing my name and my ill-fame, yet he believed me ! A good knight he was and courteous ; but I came away sore and angry because he would not promise so much as to break a spear on me when he might dispose of his body ; for he said as I had made amends in better sort than by way of arms, he declined to require it otherwise. So I left him unransomed and came again to this land.

“ Then I went to tell Gilleis how I had sped. But I lied. I had told him all truly, I said ; and no, I said, he did not believe me. I kissed her in her swoon to seal the lie.

“ It came to pass before the year was out, Brose laid me again at her gate, wounded in deep earnest. I cried out when I saw her that I would not keep those terms, that rather than burn through such another night I would take the frost. Yet when I opened my eyes to life, Gilleis was there tending me ; and for many days Gilleis. And before I had strength to take — she gave.

“ Her most sweet affection once mine, grew passing well, and was the dearer under peril of instant bitter ending. Before long Brose brought me word of that knight Sir Berel ; by the good offices of the first of Irish knights Sir Marhaus, he was at liberty and returning. Then I took horse and rode down to the Marches to await him at the Forest Cross-roads. For two days I watched there till he came. He came bound hand and foot, laid across the saddle. In like manner two followed behind. I knew him, for his beaver was broken away ; me he knew by my arms. In God's name he called on me to remember my offers, and to help them from a foul knight and a murderous, who had overcome them. He besought me to turn from ado and rather carry warning of their case to Sir Marhaus, who followed nigh, for this knight was so big of his hands that few might match him. I knew well who drove them so : that was Sir Turquine, brother to Sir Carados, whom Launcelot met and slew as so he drove Sir Gaheris. He smote foully at the bound man as he rode past him to come at me. Then I turned and fled, and laughed as I rode. And in a little while I escaped from Sir Turquine and came to the

open. Then I lamed my horse, and rode on again at a soft pace till I met a big knight, no other than Sir Marhaus. We saluted, and he asked me of three knights who were of his fellowship. I told him that beyond the river I had seen one knight, driving three before him, bound across their horses; and I taught him the way contrary, and excused myself from him because my horse was lame. So misguided he departed. And I deemed I should keep the love of sweet Gilleis, for I knew more than a little of the ways of Sir Turquine, and that knights who fell into his hands were seen no more.

“Though by frauds I won her and kept her, I would not have her fastened to me by any bond but her free love, and spite of her woman’s wish we never came to wedlock. Then came promise of another bond. I carried her to Cardigan, and there the summer months ran over with such bounty of love no word can tell, and half I thought no bolt would ever strike me for my sins.

“On a windy day, looking out, I saw Sir Marhaus ride past to take the sea for Ireland. The one I feared to see was not among his company. So I turned and kissed Gilleis with a glad heart. I kissed her never again living or dead. Then I took horse, and I saw, as I rode the heights, the ship labour out to sea and dwindle away. I rode far that day, and fought and slew because I was light of heart.

“But meanwhile the winds were so strong and contrary that the ship put back for Galis, and about sundown fell to wreck on the bar. All this Gilleis spied from her tower, and she sent down her barge and a messenger, praying all to return to take lodging. And when Sir Marhaus was come, spent with sickness and the sea, Gilleis herself in her kindness came into the hall to ask how he did. I came homing, and from without I saw her bright head pass, and being glad I called to her by name; and she looked out smiling. Now when Sir Marhaus heard her name he considered her well, and asked her of her grace to tell him if she were Gilleis la Orpheline; and she said, ‘Aye.’ And seeing how she was girdled high, he deemed all was well and asked eagerly after



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his friend Sir Berel, and how he had sped out of peril in the Marches. Her eyes filled at his name, and she said she knew naught of that. Then he held her in blame, letting her know of her knight's good faith, and lamented for him, supposing him to have been shamefully slain. I entered and stood at gaze, and Gilleis stood and looked at me. He knew me by my arms, and saluted; and as I made no return, he put me in mind of our meeting, and what had passed between us. All white she was. She stood looking into my face. She put her hands to her girdle. 'Lie still, lie still!' she said, and fell down.

"Afterwards she sent for me, and meekly prayed me to tell her the whole truth. Yet of her own wit she knew it already. So I kneeled by her and told her all, as it had been an old dream. She turned her head and lay quiet and never spoke to me more. And before long, having put from her untimely the burden she had of me, she died. And I have buried her.

"She loved me best. Had she loved him so, I deem she surely could have lived. She loved me best, and therefore has she died.

"Curse me! You, Sir Nacien, if you have the gift to draw curses, speed now on me the worst curses you know."

Nacien the Hermit spoke for consolation: "Doubt not," he said, "but that God shall reward you for your sins."

"The right avenger is dead," said Aglovale, heavily. "While I buried her he died. Sir Marhaus turned back on a quest through the Marches, and there shortly he met with Sir Turquine, and fared no better than others before him: overcome, stripped naked, beaten with thorns, prisoned underground. There in prison he found his friend, whose two fellows were dead, who was then near death, who died that same night. On the morrow Sir Turquine was slain by Sir Launcelot.

"I also went and sought the Marches for Sir Turquine or any there appointed to slay me. I found my brother Sir Durnor. Sir Turquine had dealt with him. He told me how Sir Berel was dead, but he could not tell me where Sir



Marhaus had gone. So I left him complaining that I would not stay.

"Sir Marhaus, when he stood and told me how he had spoken with Gilleis, looked as my father King Pellinore looked when once he struck me. And he excused himself from my roof and went out straight. He did not put me to any question. He left me untouched. He was not quite ready to slay me then; but surely now he should be ready. Yet Sir Marhaus and I have not met again."

Suddenly Aglovale writhed, waved out his sword, and fell to raving blasphemously that he would not take his death of any man of less worship than Sir Lamorak his brother; and rushing out like one possessed, he went shouting for Sir Marhaus over the hillside, and Nacien saw him no more till another morn.

So began the healing of Aglovale. Day by day the holy man handled him to ransack all his life and discover his bane; gentle and severe, compassionate and unsparing, he found the way to win of that perverse nature trust and reverence. Before Brose was whole the Hermit was ware of the meekest penitent that ever he ordered, who followed him in prayer and fasting and hearing Mass daily. Nacien also gave him a cilice for wear that he put off neither by day nor night. Brose fretted seeing his master go so lean, and warned him he was in no case to win worship.

"Hold your peace," said Aglovale, "nor tempt me."

Then Nacien called him, seeing him fit to be instructed of the spiritual knighthood. He declared the virtue of perfect faith and a pure spirit that should achieve more than strength and hardihood; while every blow given should yield praise to God, and every blow taken should yield prayer; when overthrow could touch no shame, and excellence no vainglory. He said also that those of this holy knighthood should slay no man unhappily by misadventure, nor should any of a good life get wound of them, for the grace of God should be in their hands, because they should be maidens clean of life and heart.

"Alas, alas!" said Aglovale.

Further, Nacien spoke by prophecy of the best knight of the world, who should do marvels without fail; and of the visitation of the Holy Grail, that all should follow and none should see, save he and his fellows, the pure and the chaste. And while Aglovale bowed down his head and wept to hear, there entered his heart vision of his young brother Percivale, with a giving of love and worship for the boy's innocence and truth. He vowed then that never should Percivale learn any harm by him.

All this Nacien gave him to know to confirm him in humility against his old lust for earthly worship and his envy. He warned him in chief against envy of his brother Sir Lamorak. Aglovale withstood him.

"My brother Sir Lamorak I do and ever shall above all men love and worship. Is this envy?"

His old passion took him hard suddenly. "Ah, Lamorak, Lamorak!" he cried, "but little love have you for me and no worship. Ah, Lamorak!" And tears and blood sprang from him.

He was brought to sounder conditions by the day of departure, for Nacien, seeing his danger, not only showed him how envy had sent him upon evil courses, but also how his natural affections were disordered and mischievous.

Said Aglovale, "Yet God made me so."

"Nay," said Nacien, "you are not made, but making. One only came made from the womb. Not before the day of your death will God have made you."

"Pray for me," said Aglovale at the last, on his knees asking blessing. "Pray to the high Father that He hold me in His service. While I am alive pray for me, and when I am dead, pray some prayers more or less for my soul."

The holy man blessed him, and promised him then, that if he amended his life well, God should grant him his death by the hand of a right noble knight, and so sent him from the peaceful height down to be proved of the world.

## CHAPTER IV

**M**Y most dear Master has set down at length how Sir Turquine hated Sir Launcelot and died at his hands ; how he used his prisoners, so that many perished ; and how three score and four good knights outlived him to report the pains and shames he laid upon them. The tale ran hot against the next record of Aglovale.

King Pellinore with his sons Aglovale and Lamorak came to Arthur's hall. They heard the sound of a great voice booming up to the rafters, the well-known voice of that good knight Sir Griflet le Fise de Dieu. At their entrance it ceased suddenly ; and Sir Griflet and all of the fellowship there present stood silent, as up the hall to salute King Arthur went Pellinore between his two sons, Sir Lamorak the renowned, shapely, and debonair, and Sir Aglovale, a dark travesty of him in feature and nature, ill-favoured from within outwards, ungainly also by misfortune, for since Humber's greenway he walked uneven. Silence held, while salutations passed. To Aglovale the King's return was formal, but Pellinore and Lamorak he welcomed and embraced and kept them beside him.

With a darkened countenance Aglovale turned alone to take his place. Then the silence struck him, and the looks that centred at him. Knights he passed barely returned his salutation. Sir Griflet alone spoke kindness, hearty and loud. With misgiving he looked for Sir Marhaus. Lo, his place was void and covered black, for he was then dead, lately slain by Sir Tristram for the truage of Cornwall.

King Arthur spoke. " Sir Aglovale, here are you come in



good season to meet a heavy charge. God grant you be clear thereof, that you may give as good answer for yourself as Sir Griflet was ready to give on your behalf."

Then he called out his nephew, Sir Gaheris, and bade him rehearse it. But before ever a word was said Aglovale's guilt looked out of his blasted face for all to see.

Gaheris held the whole ugly story exact at every point. It had rounded complete to Sir Marhaus upon speech with his dying friend; and from him the sons of Lot had it; and since he no longer lived himself to prefer the charge, they, out of good hate to the House of Pellinore, were forward and fain to press it.

"Therefore," said Gaheris, when he had told all, "a liar and a traitor I declare you, Sir Aglovale de Galis, and causer of the deaths of a fair kind lady and a noble true knight, and I cry you a shame on the fellowship of the Round Table."

Aglovale leaned heavy on his sword. The gentle head of Gilleis turned away, and the silence she took to the grave accused him more hardly than did Sir Gaheris. Twice King Arthur summoned his answer. To a dead hush he wrung it out.

"It is truth!" said Aglovale.

Through the hall sounded one great breath of indignation and amazement upon an answer so wildly amiss. Then an angry hum swelling, and the wrathful eyes of King Pellinore, and the cry of Lamorak as he cursed high, brought the unhappy man to his senses.

With the right answer vainly he followed the wrong: "Prove it on my body!" he cried. He could not overtake his error.

One cried for him to be heard: one only, Sir Griflet. A crash of voices opposed. Again and again Aglovale, desperate, lifted the right answer; with liar and traitor loud against him from many throats, he was beaten hoarse. King Arthur commanded silence to deny him his asking.

"Since Sir Gaheris has charged you with great villainy,

and you, Sir Aglovale, have answered aye thereto, now betwixt you there is no ground for debate. And as you are thus accorded, to go to battle were a wrong I will in no wise countenance."

"Look on him now," said Gaheris, low to his brothers. "I have heard tell that King Pellinore's queen when she carried him envisaged the Questing Beast."

"My Lord Arthur," cried Aglovale, "even as I am fellow and partner to the worship of the Round Table, so are all here present also fellows and partners to any disworship of mine. Sir, by your head—as this noble company give me to know they have no liking for my fellowship—by your head give me leave to answer with my body whoso wills to prove me unworthy this high order of fellowship. And that shall be proved never while I have life; never! for I promise, my lord, I will never yield myself as overcome. And howsoever I have answered to Sir Gaheris, wit you all it was out of no fear of him nor of better than he, and that can I make good by whosoever should undertake to slay me."

"Sir Aglovale," returned Arthur, "the charge concerns you as liar and traitor. As at this time you are not appealed as a coward."

Sir Gaheris let him know his danger; with loud scorn he refused him, and warned him they could lightly be rid of his fellowship by means of a cart and a hempen twist, as no noble knight would have ado with him.

Aglovale at that shrank and lost power to speak. He heard other voices with Sir Gaheris, for many knights present had come out of Turquine's prison; and these, hot and bitter from the vile outrage they had endured, were the hardest on Aglovale's misconduct. Maybe the merciless condemnation of him by men themselves not blameless, as namely, Sir Gawaine, leaned on a suspicion that by a good understanding with Sir Turquine he had accomplished his villainous ends.

King Pellinore understood why, after Gaheris had spoken, Aglovale's gaze turned quick to him, and held hard. He looked with recall of time past at the day he entered the



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fellowship of the Table Round; when the son avowed his deserving of shameful death; when the father gripped his sword with a will; when the right answer was rehearsed. Now King Pellinore made no sign; with a Roman heart he watched his infamous son, and he would in no manner speak for him.

"Whatsoever you will, my Lord Arthur, I assent thereto," he said.

Lamorak in a fury was jerking at his sword, but King Pellinore kept his hand on the hilts to hold it down.

Then into the hall came Sir Durnor. With a great clatter according to his wont he came swinging through the midst and saluted Arthur, and then his father and brother, kissing them heartily.

"And brother Sir Aglovale, where is he?" said Durnor.

He looked about, saw where he stood, and turned; but Lamorak withheld him, and let him know how Aglovale had been charged, and how he had answered. Then went Durnor muttering strong oaths in his beard, and came straight to Aglovale.

"Alas! brother, you are unhappy," he said, and kissed his cheek.

Now, had Lamorak been so kind almost might the heart of Aglovale have burst for joy; but of Durnor he could take little comfort, for he set no store on him and his easy, imperfect conditions.

Great above all voices rose Sir Griflet's again. "Lo, my Lord Arthur, here am I, not discharged from my quarrel!"

"How so?" said Arthur. "Now you must needs withdraw, foredone by Sir Aglovale's own word."

"Not for that will I withdraw," said Griflet. "Against Sir Gaheris I did affirm that Sir Aglovale de Galis was a good knight and true, and promised to prove it with my body, and I think not to go back on what I have once said."

Then Aglovale smote down his head, red to the hair for the scathe of such kindness. Others stared and questioned; some deemed there was mockery afoot, for that maker of sharp

years Sir Dinadan had been seen whispering Sir Griflet, now he stood at Sir Gaheis' elbow and whispered him. Gaheis laughed in a manner.

"As for my part," said he on high, "I take right excuse of my person, seeing that a nearer case is now present."

"So were I the better pleased to encounter Griflet; and earnestly he looked on Aglovale.

At that Sir Kay, Sir Mordred, and others discomfited their laughter; but Arthur was displeased, saying he played with the honour of the Round Table.

"My lord," said Griflet, "I am in order and right fain."

Aglovale lifted up his head; he understood the favour generously offered, but involved in a snare to his face. He took up his part.

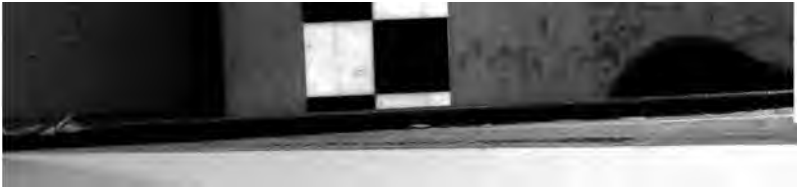
"Sir Griflet," he said, "none but I shall be contrary against you. In mortal battle I will stand as long as I may with what might I have. I will never speak."

Spite of the King's frown, laughter rose and swept the hall till even Durnor turned his eye to eye Aglovale and Griflet waited till they heard. Enchafed, he warned Sir Griflet of his folly and untruth.

"You speak as you hold, my lord; since I list to hold otherwise, I require that I may make good my words on Sir Aglovale."

Naught that the King and others could say availed to move him from his purpose.

"My lord Arthur," cried Aglovale, "I will not have my fellows who approve of the title of knight to not that they will fail while I have them to the uttermost; for I declare that I will not yield recreant to Sir Griflet; and in my battle, then stint not to the word."



contention. On my faith, it  
my poor body can bestow."  
wept and cursed. Others, he said,  
Sir Gawaine, by fraud and unfaith,  
betard, as all knew, yet was he at ease  
Aglovale. Then King Pellinore named  
miscalling her in such a manner that  
and departed.

May Saint Stephen's at dusk as Aglovale  
the morn. Near by the King's palace  
night, and there shout and laughter rocked  
Camelot. He stood to listen, and he was very  
he then stood but at twenty-four years. By  
Fise de Dieu, entering on the like errand.  
and, but as he passed his adversary he put out his  
Aglovale fell kneeling behind him, and kissed his  
his sword, in passionate worship for the gift  
death they promised him; and his full heart got  
weeping.

fair meadow beside Camelot, all white with lady-  
came at early day King Arthur with his knights to  
battle; and there came King Pellinore and his son  
stark and sober, to witness; and there came Griflet  
and fellows; and there came Aglovale with Durnor.  
must either party rehearse his contention before the  
and as Aglovale gave out his name, and the titles and  
he had to maintain, such a mock of acclaim endorsed  
was paid outright on all his incontinence after worship. At  
Sir Griflet lifted up his great voice. He was ready, he  
so soon as he had done with Sir Aglovale, to have ado  
with whoever should please to take up his contention after.

"Be content with what licence you have," said Arthur.  
He was vexed and angry.

Then Griflet and Aglovale, having done with words all that  
was due, rode asunder, fetched their range, feutred their spears,  
at a signal came together with all the speed of their horses.  
Aglovale was smitten down with a wound in the side. Before



Sir Griflet could turn again he was on his feet, calling on him to light down. As for his hurt, it trimmed him for battle; the pain of it quickened his heart, that the breath of derision had left like a dead cinder within him.

They took out their swords and began strong battle on foot, hammering so hard that their harness was all dented and broken, and darkened from bloody wounds. Tracing and giving from the bright sun, they circled up and down, till the white meadow was trodden and defiled, as though herds had gone over, and none could say which of them had the advantage. Sir Griflet was held to be the better knight, and so he seemed by his clean strokes and foins; but Sir Aglovale had his old practice with the left hand, and took to it when the right was weary.

For upwards of an hour they fought without stint; and then they stood apart to breathe awhile. Sir Griflet put off his helm and faced the cool wind; Sir Aglovale put off his.

"Oh, shame," said Lamorak, "to uncover such a face as that!"

"His lips are white," said Durnor. "As I know him, he will do extremes."

Again the two armed their heads and went to battle; and for an hour more they fought strongly and bled much, while none could forecast the issue, so even and stout they stood.

Then Durnor cried, "By God's eyes, Sir Aglovale is standing to him against the sun!"

That so he did was soon seen beyond question; and then all could espy that even with that advantage yielded him Sir Griflet was giving back; his strokes were random, his shield was low. In the end a good blow beat down sword and rove through helm, and he fell.

In great dread Aglovale stood still, waiting for his adversary to rise; then he went and put off his helm, and found that he lived and moved.

"Alas! Sir Griflet, now are you overcome and must yield."

Griflet answered weakly, "Sir Aglovale, though I be over-



come, yet will I not yield ; so take your sword and slay me outright."

"Have pity and yield," cried Aglovale, "for so I but keep my dishonour, and should I slay you I have it at increase."

"I had liefer die," said Griflet, "for truly I find you, Sir Aglovale, even a better knight than I deemed."

But Aglovale moved away a little, put off his own helm, and sat to rest, in hope that Griflet might recover force to stand up against him. In a frenzy he tore up the green with his hands, and all the pale flowers round him were dappled red with white, true coloured for that time of Pentecost.

"In the name of God, Sir Griflet, essay to rise so soon as you may ; for our blood goes from us, and yours more than mine."

So Griflet did on his helm and got to his feet ; and Aglovale stood up to meet him, but his shield he left, and his head he left bare, and he stood against the sun to perform his battle. At that Arthur was displeased, and knights partors came down the field with his command to Aglovale to arm his head duly. So ill-advised was Aglovale as to answer the King in maugre and orgule ; for he said that he would not ; he would fight so as he pleased. "And if," he said, "my lord Arthur holds me so in default, I ween as by agreement he may sort me with a hempen cord ; and I would have him to know how for that adjustment I list to leave my neck bare and ready. But tell him that against Sir Griflet faithfully my hands shall keep my head to the best of my power."

Greatly incensed was King Arthur at so despiteful an answer, and full soon had Aglovale cause to rue it. He kept his head fairly, while he struck but seldom, needing his sword for defence. Sir Griflet held on, and twice reached his head, gashing cheek and scalp ; but he bled so fast that he could not stand long. At a light stroke he went down finally, and required his death.

"Ah, Sir Griflet, what is the worth of my name against the worth of your life ? Yield, for slay you I cannot."

"Make no words. I would have slain you without question.

By the love I bear King Pellinore, I would sooner die than face him yielden recreant against his son's worship. So finish."

Then Aglovale in great anguish went up the field and came to King Arthur; and he besought him piteously to take the battle off his hands that Sir Griflet might live, for he would not yield.

Launcelot, who came riding down leisurely, beheld Sir Aglovale, bareheaded, all bloody and spent from long fighting, and heard his prayer. "On my faith, he is a right good knight," said Launcelot to the winds.

"I will not so," said Arthur; "for you shall finish out this battle, or else as a defaulter you shall be served with shameful death. For first," said Arthur, "your fellows here present have no mind to release you from the titles you stand to maintain. And second," said Arthur, "there is great suspicion of this battle as not of true intent and purpose, but guileful and dishonest; therefore I must needs have it brought to justification of death on one or the other. And last," said King Arthur, "unruly have you, Sir Aglovale, defied me, and scorned my head to take you in default; so look not that I should lightly acquit you; and except you perform to the uttermost upon Sir Griflet you shall have the penalty."

"Oh me! What folly have I done!" said Aglovale.

"My lord Arthur, to my own account justly have you answered me; but as to Sir Griflet, consider mercy for him, who would honestly have slain me out, were I in his case."

"As for Sir Griflet," said Arthur, "sorry am I to lose so noble a knight, and that in a wrong cause; but this battle was of his seeking and against all counsel; in maugre and orgule he took it, and now must aby it. And well I deem that if in all integrity he did jeopard his life, he would sooner lose it than give occasion against the worship of the Table Round."

Aglovale in his distress spoke to his father: "Ah, sire King Pellinore, as I am your son, though unworthy, give me counsel. Not for all the world would I slay Sir Griflet; yet shameful death is great dread and bitter dole."



Then failed the iron heart of Pellinore; with a groan he fell forward, swooning for sorrow. Lamorak and Durnor took him up between them. Both were like drunken men, unsteady and spoke thick.

"Come," said Lamorak, "get him hence, lest he recover before this matter is resolved and done with."

"Get him hence by yourself," said Durnor. "I stand here. I turn not my back at this extremity."

Lamorak turned once for a moment, and earnestly, with tears running down his face, he looked on his brother Aglovale, who as rain to parched earth felt that kindness on his trouble, and judged it for counsel.

A whisper of ruth began as Sir Aglovale stood to look, as it were, his last after father and brother, and then slouched wearily back again to Sir Griflet, to find if he might yet help him from his hard choice.

"Ah, my lord Arthur," said Sir Launcelot, "may you not find him better terms; for never saw I one in so piteous a case as set between shameful life and shameful death; for to slay Sir Griflet would be a shame for ever."

"For the sake of his noble house and for the sake of Sir Griflet I am right heavy," said Arthur, "but I may do no otherwise for rightful judgment, or I should aggrieve all the many here who approve the contention he bears against Sir Griflet."

"That is sooth," said Gaheris and others; but as many more spoke out for mercy.

"Look you, Sir Launcelot," said Gaheris, "how, save his brother Sir Durnor, and your brother Sir Ector, none of those taken from Sir Turquine's prison and fellows to outrage will excuse Sir Aglovale from title as liar and traitor?"

"Now, beside these," said Sir Launcelot, "do any here present gainsay excuse?"

Then no voice but Sir Gawaine's rose against Sir Aglovale, while Sir Lionel de Ganis, Sir Brian de Listenoise, and some others told Sir Gaheris he spoke at fault as to them.

Said Launcelot then, "Give me leave to meddle, good my lord, and to treat for Sir Aglovale; for though he be all so much to blame, yet he shows here as a good and true knight."

"I am loth," said Arthur, "as this battle touches the honour of the Round Table to doubt and scandal. Yet, as for that, Sir Griflet is the more to blame, and I ween scoffer Sir Dinadan most of all."

"I will so deal as to right it. Give me leave," said Launcelot.

"You may essay," said Arthur.

"Sir Gawaine," said Launcelot, "bring to remembrance how I rescued you from Sir Turquine's brother Carados when you were bound overthwart his saddle; and you, Sir Gaheris, how in like case I rescued you; and you, Sir Kay, how by my means you were put from prison; and you, Sir Brandel." And so on Sir Launcelot named some thirty knights. "And since," he said, "all you have offered me thanks and worship for these rescues, I require you for my sake to excuse Sir Aglovale from his battle and commute on terms that he may live."

"Sir Launcelot," said Gawaine, "I may not refuse you," and so answered all, but said that because of his shameful deeds Sir Aglovale should not be relieved on easy terms.

"So be it," said Launcelot; "choose you an assessor and we will deal." And straight Sir Gaheris was chosen, and with him he treated and agreed.

Aglovale in great despair went back to his adversary, dressing his heart to bitter death.

"Sir Griflet, there is no remedy, but one of us must die or yield."

"No question!" said Griflet, feebly. "I have got my death as I think; so stand not, but take my life."

"Live you! for 'tis I that must not."

"Would I could serve you so, but I have no force."

"Set your heart to live—mine is set to shameful death."

"Shameful death!"

"Yea, sir, I leave this battle to be hanged. With all my heart I thank you for your great pains spent in vain. And, Sir Griflet, I pray you say what you can for me to my father."

"Shameful death!" said Griflet. With a strong effort he rose upright and heaved up his sword; aimless, by mere weight it fell, and he with it came to earth and lay senseless. There was no more help in him.

"God grant I be hanged to some purpose," said Aglovale, as he turned to go again to ask his penalty. "And God grant it be over," he said, "before Lamorak come again."

Down to meet him Sir Launcelot came shining. His head was bare, he bore no shield, and his sword was ready drawn.

"Leave Sir Griflet, Sir Aglovale," he cried, "and have ado with me; for I take up his contention against you, and will prove it upon you."

Lightly then, as though he bore no wounds, Aglovale sprang and laughed for joy; and wind and sun touched him from open heaven, as God could grant no dearer grace than tears from Lamorak and death from Launcelot. In a breath their swords were clashing together, and with stroke and stroke still Aglovale like a madman laughed. Biding his time, Sir Launcelot played with him, warding and turning his random strokes; and before long with fine force he struck Aglovale's sword clean from his hand, and would not suffer him to have it again.

"Now, Sir Aglovale, choose you to yield or die?"

"I have no choice, Sir Launcelot, but to die."

Then Launcelot tempted him. "Yield to me, Sir Aglovale, and I will ensure you against shameful death, if language and body may; and I will ensure you that none in my hearing shall ever name you amiss but he shall answer to me."

"Sir, I cannot," said Aglovale, "for albeit I have been liar and traitor, perjured and coward I will not to be for exchange. And as you are named courteous Sir Launcelot, put me from my trouble quickly, and before God I will give you thanks."

"Now God have mercy on your soul," said Launcelot, and he swung his sword sheer upon Aglovale's head, yet deliverly

from the crown he severed but the hair to the winds. "And keep you body alive to a better life," said Launcelot, while Aglovale stood mazed and lost, and looked at the sun and the flowered field, and the sword that had not slain. Frantic tears sprang, draining his strength like blood. "Begrudge not a proof of your worship," said Launcelot, greatly moved.

"Sir, such mockery is vile, whatever my sins! Ah, Sir Launcelot, you that made me glad!"

"Know now, Sir Aglovale, that King Arthur will release you on terms. Will you to take penance as readily as you take death?"

"Fair sir, can you swear that you are not beguiling me to new scorns, and that Sir Dinadan has no voice in this matter? So of your charity deal, as I have bled overmuch to keep my wits clear."

"By the faith of my body you need not dread. And I promise you I will require of you no more than I would myself perform, put case that I had offended as you. Yet an you say the loth word to that, and put yourself into my hands as overcome, I will take you and keep you from shameful death as well as I may."

"Ah, sir, you could name no penance that I would refuse. And I do greatly need to live. Yet I looked to be out of this coil by now."

"I warn you, Sir Aglovale, you may not be lightly quit, for very shamefully have you misdone."

With that Launcelot took up Aglovale's sword, and holding him by the hand brought him to Arthur. Aglovale like a child confided and held, for he was greatly spent.

"Sir Aglovale," said Arthur, "at the instance of Sir Launcelot and with the assent of your fellows, I am content to discharge you from this battle, given that you assent to the terms he shall put for your life."

"Sir," said Aglovale, "I will never say loth for life or death in this matter."

Then said Launcelot, "I require you, Sir Aglovale, in the presence of our lord, King Arthur, and our fellows of the Table

Round, to swear here on your sword to take penance in this wise : soon as you are able, to go in your shirt barefoot, with a crier to decry you at every market-cross ; so on your feet to go hence to the Forest Marches ; there, like him you so evilly betrayed, to abide pains and shame according to the custom that Sir Turquine used ; and there to rear a tomb for him, and found and endow a religious place, with good men to pray daily for the soul of him and his fellows dead in that prison. So shall you be held quit of your deeds."

Straightway Aglovale kneeled, laid his hand on his sword, and swore to fulfil all.

"Give here Sir Aglovale's sword," said Arthur, "for I will keep it from him till he shall redeem it to full satisfaction."

"Sir, I will get it as soon as I can go," said Aglovale.

He stood on his feet and tried to word fair acknowledgments. Deep colour rushed up to his face ; he had not blood enough left in him also to man his heart ; he swooned as Lamorak came again.

"Now may you say, King Arthur, that you have a fair fellowship, if this be the worst of your knights," said Launcelot, and he reported how Sir Aglovale had answered him.

Yet Arthur never after did favour Sir Aglovale, for cause that once he had given answer unknighly.

To the wonder and chagrin of Brose, Sir Lamorak with Sir Durnor brought his master to lodging, and unarmed him to see to his hurts. They found upon him his wear of cilice.

Lamorak muttered, "Defend us!" "Would he be such a holy terror among us?"

Durnor muttered, "In haire! He fought so in haire! Jesu! is it for enchantment?"

Their brother's eyes lifted upon them indifferent, laying reproof to their curious and troubled minds.

Durnor said, "Alas! brother, pardon." Lamorak drew away.

Straightway Aglovale asked for him weakly.

"Brother Sir Aglovale, Brose has more skill to serve you than I."



"Sir Lamorak, grant me my desire: ransack my wounds with your own hands."

"Nay, but why?" said Lamorak, disquieted.

"Ah, fair brother," said Aglovale, painfully, "either to heal from your touch quick and clean for a token, or to rankle. Let me know."

Lamorak drew back, stricken with compunction and daunted. He was deeply distressed. "Fair Lord Jesu!" he said inwardly, "sweeten my heart at my brother's need." Yet could he get no ease.

"Alas!" he said, "there is no such miracle of healing in my hands."

"I take no keep—essay for good or ill."

"I cannot—I will not!" said Lamorak, and went out weeping.

The wounds of Aglovale seemed to do well enough without him, and they were not slow in healing over.

Durnor would hearten his brother against his penance. "As for the pain," said Durnor, "as I know it lasts not long; and as for the shame, many knights better than you and I have endured it." Thus did Durnor encourage his brother, who held his peace under him.

And as soon as he was whole, with strength for his penance, Aglovale went in his shirt barefoot from Camelot, and a crier decried him at every market-cross; so on his feet he went and came to the Forest Marches; and there he took pain and shame as meekly as any grey penitent; and there he provided fitly for a rich tomb and a Priory place where prayers should be made daily.

Then came Sir Kay on behalf of King Arthur, and delivered him his sword again, as he had redeemed it to full satisfaction.

Then came Nacien the Hermit down from Wenlock Edge, and blessed him with good counsel.

So Aglovale came to an end of his vain passion for renown.



## CHAPTER V

**T**HE next record of Aglovale begins with him lying low and very feeble, watching the boy Percivale come and go.

To fulfil his penance he had so outgone his strength that his wounds, new and old, reopened and bled; wherefore Durnor had brought him to Severn-side, and so by water to Cardiff, to lay him in the keeping of the Queen their mother.

With no word did she reproach him, nor did any; and soon he grew aware by the simple reflections of Percivale that King Pellinore accorded to him living that one kindness he had besought after his death.

Percivale and his sister Saint whispered and played together within the bay of a window, while Aglovale rested his weary heart with dreams as he watched the boy. When trappings sounded below the children leaned out their heads, and eagerly their tongues ran; till Percivale bethought him and stole from the sunny bay to look if Aglovale slept.

"May I serve you, brother?" he asked.

Aglovale answered "No," and asked idly who entered below.

"Sir Lamiel with his kin, and Sir Harvis," said Percivale.

Again to more clatter he ran and looked out; and so the noise went on with little pause till Aglovale roused to call him.

"For what cause to-day do so many enter?"

Percivale was troubled, and stood silent till Aglovale asked again.

"Alas! brother, I know little, and that I was bidden to keep from you."

Aglovale turned his face to the wall and so lay silent. Percivale stood waiting awhile, and then he asked timidly, "Brother Sir Aglovale, are you now angry with me?"

"No, fair child," said Aglovale.

Percivale withdrew softly; but he found no happiness with Saint; and often he looked, and in vain, for any sign from his brother.

In came Durnor, and Aglovale shifted and eyed him as with a moody countenance he paced up and down.

"Sir Durnor, are you bidden to keep me in the dark?"

"I take no bidding," said Durnor, and stamped about and swore loud, while Percivale and Saint nestled and peeped under cover of a curtain.

"Then what goes forward?" said Aglovale.

"Shame and wrong!" stormed Durnor. "I take no keep but you shall know. Aglovale, your birthright goes from you."

Quick and hard he breathed to the blow. "To Lamorak or to Tor?" he asked.

"To Lamorak."

"We may thank our mother for that. I dreaded it might be to the bastard."

"I would deem it less unkindness in a half-brother. Now fie on Lamorak! Though he, and Tor also, have worship above you, yet are you the firstborn of King Pellinore's Queen and his right heir. And as for the past, that has been paid for."

Aglovale lay quiet while Durnor swore himself hoarse; then he reached to his sword.

"I require you, Durnor, to help me to my harness."

"What would you do, brother?"

"Take no thought. I would have on my harness."

"I will well," said Durnor, and went with great strides.

He himself was in full harness when he came again with Brose bearing all pieces to arm his brother.

"I will stand with you, Sir Aglovale, in word and deed, whatsoever you say and do."



## AGLOVALE DE GALIS

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Aglovale looked at him hard, biting his lip. "I shall be glad. See you fail not."

"Ah, my master," said Brose, "you have not strength for the weight! For but little this wound would again break."

Yet Aglovale stood up lean and weak, and bade him brace on quickly.

Percivale came asking to serve. Brose let him take the spurs to fasten on, but Aglovale jerked and said, "I shall not need these." More kindly he answered to the boy's timid offer, "Yea, little brother, carry my helm for me if you will. I want it not now."

Brose looked at him then, startled to suspicion; but Durnor heard all heedlessly. Between them they had to lift him along, he was so weak; and Percivale followed after with the helm. So they all went down to the hall.

Filled with armed knights was the hall. Between the King and Queen stood Lamorak in arms complete. Tor was there also. Up the hall went a young knight bareheaded; kneeling down before Lamorak he advanced the hilts of his sword held between his two hands, and over them Lamorak laid his hands. Then the knight swore acknowledgment to Sir Lamorak as King Pellinore's heir; when he should rule in the King's stead his land and castle to hold under him, to serve him in war, to uphold his right against all soever. So he swore, and rose and passed.

Up the hall came Aglovale, leaning hard upon Durnor; and then alone he stood forward before King Pellinore and his Queen and Lamorak. Much wonder had they and little joy to see him there.

"Sire," said Aglovale, "you do me wrong, and so do all these who have acknowledged Sir Lamorak your heir; for none here present had right by birth or station to take precedence of me. Yet I promise you I will be of the first to serve, though now I be of the last to pledge."

With that Aglovale ungirt his sword, kneeled down before Lamorak, and advanced the hilts held between his two hands. Lamorak started back dismayed, and refused to hold.

"Fair brother, rise!" he cried; and then he caught him strongly by the hands to lift him from his knees.

"Nay, but it shall be so," said King Pellinore. He grasped Lamorak by either wrist; the Queen also put out a shaking hand to compel; then Aglovale gave out his formal oath of acknowledgment.

"And now, Sir Lamorak, speak for me; that my father take his curse from me, and that my mother bless me."

He had all he asked and more: Lamorak's embrace with his tears and kiss upon his cheek.

"Ah, Sir Aglovale," cried Durnor, "falsely have you done to beguile me so!"

Yet he plucked off helmet and spurs, unbelted, and thumped to his knees; and offering his sword to Lamorak he swore in order.

"I give you to know," he said, "that this I do maugre my own will, and only for the sake of Sir Aglovale; and otherwise for his sake I had as lief present to you the blade as the hilts upon this occasion."

"He cannot stand or go," said Tor. He drew his brother's arm round his neck to hold him up, and as Lamorak came and lifted likewise on the other side their eyes met in pitiful remembrance of their day on Humber's bank.

Young Percivale at his distance by Brose watched all, wondering, and without understanding he was troubled. Close he followed when his brothers passed out, Tor and Lamorak linked to bear up Aglovale, Durnor at their heels. So graced and attended by all his brothers, Aglovale left the hall, spent and weary to death from forsaking his birthright.

Together they came to Aglovale's bed. Then Percivale took hold of his sword, kneeled down, and lifted up his hands on the hilts to Aglovale.

"I swear I will keep naught from you more. I swear your will shall be mine. Brother Sir Aglovale, I swear I love you."

The boy ended with a storm of tears; and the disinherited man bowed down his head to his young brother, while sobs drew him so fiercely that soon he swooned for pain.

"So as I said," muttered Brose, and pointed to fresh blood stains. Lamorak looked on, aware that the man eyed him with ill-will. Then he heard Aglovale breathe his name as he came to himself, and he was vanquished to contrition.

"Fair brother," he said, "could God and you both pardon me that once my heart was too bitter, now might I serve you."

"How think you!" said Durnor. "Does Maker God despise him as did you? Or would He mix scores as did King Arthur?"

None heeded him, so he turned and roamed the chamber, making language to himself. Lamorak, untouched by scoffs, but greatly abashed by Aglovale's open love, kneeled down beside him, and when he had prayed, all in diffidence softly he searched and dressed the renewed wound.

"You are bought at a price, Sir Lamorak!" cried Durnor.

## CHAPTER VI

**M**Y most dear Master has set down little concerning the death of King Pellinore. The Questing Beast he mentions, and the Fair Head, and that Gawaine and his brethren, to avenge their father's death, slew him secretly ten years later than the wedding of Arthur; the unhappiness of Sir Tor and the remorse of King Arthur he passes over, and the whole of that matter rests in pages lost or unwritten. This story goes on when he was dead whose will would have kept young Percivale from the hand of his brother Aglovale.

In vain the sad Queen petitioned Lamorak and Tor, with reminder of the many times Aglovale had amended, but to turn again to evil courses, and worse than before; they, in respect of how the boy had plighted love to the broken man, had no mind to move between them.

In early days, after the death of Pellinore, Lamorak was gentle and diffident in his dealing with the brother he had supplanted. Once he asked, all in kindness and courtesy, his company to the court of King Arthur.

"Is this bidding, my lord Sir Lamorak?" asked Aglovale.

"Far be it from me to you," said Lamorak, mildly.

"Then," said Aglovale, "I ask to be excused till a time when you shall be less ready to blush for me."

Lamorak reddened hotly at that; for in truth Aglovale had rightly read his secret heart, and in stark humility was ruthless to bring it open. Doubtless Lamorak found it a hard matter to rule his brother without offence.

Aglovale at this time held no high office in Galis, but

served his brother as steward. It may be that Lamorak, intending honour and confidence, put many matters into his hands that he would purposely turn to his own disparagement. Or it may be that, knowing Lamorak's deficiencies, he honestly and indifferently lent himself for supply. Either reading finds warrant in the faults of the one or the other. Lamorak was lavish, debonair, impetuous, and hated cares; Aglovale was of an intolerable temper in these years, meeting offence half way with deference, and enduring favour with greater deference, as it were the greater offence.

With an anxious mind the Queen their mother watched the diverse lives of her two sons: Aglovale, who drudged obscure; Lamorak, who shone in court and field, famous for his deeds of valour and grace.

By degrees Aglovale assumed larger control. Seeing how disorders rose and spread for lack of a firm ruler, he took on himself office as constable, and rode down in force upon transgressors, scouring out abuses in all quarters of Galis. Then the Queen sent letters to Lamorak that at last fetched him to her, when she bade him take heed to Aglovale's practice.

"What evil has he turned to?" said Lamorak.

"None," said the Queen. "He is out of nature blameless. Yet consider how all your revenues now pass through his hands; and how he takes rule of your heritage in arms; and your castles are garnished according to his orders; and lately he has gone about with mastery, slaying and destroying whoever withstand him."

"Ah, Madam, I deem you wrong him much. At his worst he was loyal ever; and I may not grieve him by distrust."

Straightway, on Tor's advice, Lamorak set about to approve his brother. He followed up Aglovale, found him destroying and establishing, sanctioned and confirmed him in all his doings, and brought him back with him to Cardiff. But there he afflicted an unhappy temper with his open thanks and commendation.

Their mother he reassured by a pitiful token: "Aglovale makes no friends in all the land. He seeks no love, and he



gets none; and I, who do little to earn any, enjoy much. I judge he is rather hated, for he is stark in his dealings."

"Percivale loves him out of measure," said the anxious mother, "and reverences him the more for some sternness. He is too young and simple to take other readings, and Aglovale ever keeps him jealously. Yet remember how he once led Durnor to folly and detriment."

Lamorak sighed impatiently. "He has had great loss, and I would not if I could put him from a little gain."

Lamorak now was minded to fulfil his part in respect of Galis, and to this purpose he was right pleased to find a treasury well replenished by the prudence and care of Aglovale. So, after leave of Arthur obtained, he took order to hold a great tournament at Cardiff, and by Tor's advice sent word namely to the King of Northgalis and his knights. So North and South gathered with great noblesse, that their best should be proved together.

Aglovale, when the day came, refused to take any part, and no argue or entreaty of his brothers could move him.

"It is great discourtesy and unkindness," said Lamorak, "and will raise scandal upon us both."

"Plainly, my lord Sir Lamorak, your command I must obey; but of my own will I will undertake no courtesy encounters."

"You flinch!" said Durnor. "Why, 'tis near three years ago!"

Aglovale flinched indeed; colour and voice forsook him. He muttered at last, "I have so vowed, till I shall again repair to the Round Table."

Lamorak reddened and held silent; he could not with a clear conscience protest; for he had not yet found the heart to renew his asking.

"Fair brothers," said Aglovale, "this if it please you I will do: I will challenge one to mortal battle, and so do my part with the best might of my body."

"Who is he, and what is your cause for battle?"

"He is a knight of Northgalis, and his name is Sir Gawdelin."

As for the cause, he has slain his cousin of Wales feloniously, and has taken his wife."

Painful silence ensued. He counted and sounded the deep of disapprobation by the pause before Lamorak spoke.

"I would it were another man and another cause."

"Sir Lamorak, as you please, I will wage this battle or I will forbear."

"I will not hinder you," said Lamorak, heavily.

So in due order Aglovale challenged and went to battle before all that gathering of knights, and the King of Northgalis as judge. A valiant man was Sir Gawdelin, but he was overcome after long and hard fighting. But though he yielded and asked mercy, none might he get of Sir Aglovale, who plucked his helmet from him and smote off his head. Then straightway he left the field and unarmed.

Lamorak could not approve him. "Needless have you given occasion for reproach. You should have granted him his life—you!"

"I redeemed my sword fairly," returned Aglovale. "Yet I doubted not to have my own deeds cast in my teeth. I tell you this is not for the first time by many."

"Fair brother, you might fall to encounter harsher strictures than mine."

"I thank you, Sir Lamorak. I know better than you how my ears had been filled this day, but for your head. You give voice for many."

Well might Lamorak complain of him: "He is incurable. His mind is diseased; he has a ravenous appetite for mortification."

It must have been about this time that Aglovale took Percivale with him to Nacien the Hermit. The boy found matter for wonder by that journey. They rode up the valley of the Usk and through the Forest Marches—a way they were to go again, far off in the years, towards the cruel night of avowal.

To a fair Priory place they came, where Aglovale dismounted and knocked. One came out to ask who he was,

and Percivale heard his answer : " A sinner named Aglovale de Galis." Presently came out the Prior, who blessed them, and took Percivale by the hand and brought him in. Then he saw a lighted chapel, and in it a rich chantry about a tomb ; and there his brother came and kneeled. In a while the boy was led to meat and lodging, but Aglovale did not follow ; and the place set for him stayed void, and so with the bed.

When at midnight a bell rang, Percivale woke alone, and rose up to find his brother. All doors stood wide, and every place was empty till he came to the chapel. There in religious clothing all were kneeling, and Aglovale still kneeled by the tomb. Then Percivale heard the Prior's voice lead, and his brother's voice after him lift up the Miserere. And when they came to the end, and other voices joined in the Gloria, he stole away, blind with unaccountable tears, and carried back to his bed a child's misery for having profanely entered the reserve of one he worshipped.

In the morning he woke to wonder if he had but dreamed ; yet the bed beside was all unpressed, and when he descended to hear Mass, Aglovale still kneeled in his place. The boy came and kneeled by him, and thrust a timid hand under his palms to take hold of the hilts of his sword. Aglovale gripped his fingers so hard that the tears stood in Percivale's eyes, and his heart was dismayed at a passion he could not understand.

Straight after Mass they took their leave and rode, and at the day's end stayed their horses at a hill where Aglovale mounted alone. When he came again, Nacien the Hermit was with him, and Percivale, awed before the face of the holy man, kneeled meekly for his blessing. Nacien gazed long and earnestly on the boy. Of slender make, and singular beauty, with a face like a maid, no kind of resemblance had Percivale to the marred and unlovely man beside him.

Nacien turned to Aglovale and said, " God has been gracious to you, my son."

Deep into night Aglovale held talk with Nacien. Percivale, from his loft, could hear alternating murmurs, as wakeful he lay

for trouble of heart. At last he covered his ears and cowered from the knowledge that he heard Aglovale sob.

Nacien with the morn found Percivale awaiting him ; and, while Aglovale slept late and heavy, he questioned the boy and heard him, finding him in heart and mind right true to faith and virtue, and passing meek and reverent.

"Know you," said Nacien, "for what cause your brother brings you here ?"

"He has taught me," said Percivale. "But, sir, I dread lest I be unworthy to hear of high and holy matters ; and, ah, sir, as I know, it is heavy dole to trespass."

His eyes so brimmed that Nacien saw, and charged him to confess his trouble freely ; so Percivale unburdened his heart, and told him he had spied upon his brother.

"Yet now," he said, "I know not certainly that I did not dream all ; and what to think I know not, nor what to say to Sir Aglovale."

"What has withheld you from question?" said Nacien. "Love or fear ?"

"Alas!" said Percivale, "as he teaches me I would eschew both love and fear ; yet now I find that verily it is ever by love and fear that I would learn of him. Sir, in this matter no way can I face without fault ; and I fear to do wrong."

Nacien sighed and pondered long ; not for Percivale alone. "My son," he said, "only seek light of the countenance of God Almighty, and look not aside this way and that upon needless inventions. Go forward to do right with all your faults upon you. As for what you have seen, whether dream or verity, doubt not your vision was ordained of God, for your guidance now or hereafter. Take heed to be faithful without presumption."

When, years later, Percivale and Galahad had passed away in the Quest of the Grail, their fellow, Sir Bors, spoke with discernment, saying that each had a countenance like an angel ; but Sir Percivale was most like St. Michael, who ever watches Satan ; but Sir Galahad was most like St. Gabriel, who ever watches the Most Highest. Sooth, on the life of Percivale the

influence of Aglovale rested dominant, and the teaching of Nacien failed, till he learned it anew from his sister Saint.

For eight days Aglovale left Percivale with Nacien on Wenlock Edge, then came and took him down to the world where soon he saw him tried and approved. For the first they met as they rode beyond Much Wenlock were Sir Meliagraunce and Sir Bors, fellows ill-matched, for Sir Bors of all the Round Table was at that time the knight of best life, of kindest heart to his fellow-man, and of truest worship to his Maker. First Sir Meliagraunce, with great importunity, would have Sir Aglovale to turn with him, but when he heard how Sir Gawdelin had come by his death, he was incensed and very bitter.

Said Aglovale, "I fight but to kill. So have I vowed for a term."

"Sir," said Bors, "that is pity; for good friendships and fellowships are won across swords."

"Aye," said Meliagraunce, moody. "You and I, Sir Aglovale, fought once on a certain matter that was light enough, and vain; and were the better friends for our pains."

Said Bors presently, "Sir Aglovale, when your term shall be accomplished, send me a spear of your courtesy, and I will break it against you with good will."

At that Aglovale was moved and glad. "Sir, lightly will I send to you so soon as I come again to the Court of King Arthur."

"Sir, may that be soon."

"As for that I doubt. Only it shall be no later than when this child is made a knight."

Meliagraunce looked down on the boy and laughed spitefully. He was given to ill jesting, and he chose to vent his grudge by play upon the innocence of Percivale. He set the boy questions, exhorted him, discoursed on the high calling of knighthood as the Devil gave him wit; for he spoke all in covert derision and with understanding to Sir Aglovale. In vain Sir Bors sought to turn him: he became the more dangerous. But Percivale, though harassed, distressed, bewildered under consciousness of mockery, stood ground excellently; in pure



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innocence he made answer so bravely and wisely that even his brother wondered to hear him ; his clear eyes and diffident bearing added singular value. Meliagraunce left off with a laugh of a little good grace. He was no bully to browbeat the boy on defeating his mischief.

Then Percivale saw Bors looking at him ; and at that his heart flew wide. Bors put his hand upon him ; and at that joy rushed through him. Aglovale and Meliagraunce rode ahead at such words as frayed the ties of old friendship, while Bors and Percivale, the knight of name and the unknown child, drew abreast at such words as fastened them friends for ever. What other issue came of that meeting waits to be told in the story of King Bagdemagus' daughter.

## CHAPTER VII

**T**HROUGH the hazards of years Percivale grew by his brother's side in ignorance undisturbed by hint or sign. Aglovale never practised deceit, but Brose dealt him some lies more or less, and Durnor also played with untruth out of his improvident kindness.

A sorry page in the life of Aglovale gives the poor return he made in brotherly kindness to Durnor, who stood by him so loyally. That Durnor was a brawler, loose and profane, accounts for his harshness, but little excuses it; the less that his own ill example had first misled his brother. His protest against Durnor's disorder wanted in temper and courtesy; in his way of repression he showed no regard for his brother's head. Angry disputes rose out of the turbulence and license of Durnor's men; Aglovale, to make an end, himself seized on delinquents, and three he hanged at the door of their master's lodge. Durnor, furious at the affront, promised revenge, and sought it in arms.

At the instance of the Queen their mother, Aglovale bent to conciliation. Alone and unarmed he sought his brother, and asked on what terms he might ransom himself from his displeasure. Too well was he hated to win through such hazardry scatheless; before Durnor could answer him a bolt whizzed and struck in his throat. It is said that he pulled out the bolt, laughed, and tossed it to Durnor before he fell down choked with blood.

In a life at that time so barren of generous word and deed, one instance stands recorded: he asked grace for the villain who shot him down.

"Since you own he has justified me; and since he has quit me of your resentment, we are both beholden to him for clearing our account."

Durnor was contrite for his part; Aglovale not a whit. So soon as he was on his feet, his hand was as heavy as before.

In an evil hour Durnor devised a remedy that brought wrath and grief. He engaged one Annowre, a noted enchantress, to turn Aglovale from his joyless ways. It was a cast of outrageous folly, but no ill-will was in the mischief he intended. So he vowed afterwards, and his plea made Aglovale's heart but the harder against him, and fetched retort that so the more hopeless beast was he.

The enchantment failed in effect, though potion and spell were so strong that when Brose came at morn and broke open the door, he found his master clean out of his wits. Annowre accounted for her ill success.

"He sleeps in a garment of enchantment. Get from him that wear of haire and he might not withstand my power."

"Haire night and day!" muttered Durnor, despairing. "Oh, poor body and soul!"

Aglovale's retaliation upon Durnor was shrewd and cruel and just; he cut him off from Percivale, and he did it openly and spitefully. Durnor, of quick affections, raged against the galling measure. His protest took the shape of siege and ambush and chase, till Tor advised Lamorak that his two brothers were mad, and fetched him into Galis for peace.

Against Durnor's passionate complaint of his jealous and spiteful courses, Aglovale made bitter retort.

"Percivale will I keep from you to the best of my power. He shall not have a pander to company."

Durnor leapt up, stammering curses. "Would to God you were not my brother; so would I pluck out your foul tongue. Before Heaven I am not so guilty! Ah, black heart to breed such venom! Alas! brother, pardon, I thought no harm. Let our brothers judge between us."

"I take no keep how they shall judge; you shall set no whore on to play her game with Percivale as you did on to me."



To Lamorak and Tor no rectitude in Aglovale could show fair against Durnor, pleading his excuse with indignant tears.

"Neither I nor Sir Tor," said Lamorak, "hold Sir Durnor deserving such extremes. Are you he, Sir Aglovale, to deal over exact with transgression."

He was speechless ; so lightly touched he bit the dust.

"As for Percivale," said Lamorak, "for larger cause than you can show against Sir Durnor, the mother that bore you mistrusted him to your hands. Now I counsel you to find some forbearance on the errors of another, or look not to keep an undue advantage you have by virtue of our silence to the boy."

Said Aglovale when he could speak, "Sirs, I thank you all for past kindness."

He uttered no protest ; he turned his back on Durnor ; he would face his penalty. So he left them.

"Alas !" said Durnor, "now know I that the land of Galis will not hold me and brother Sir Aglovale. I will go."

"Not so," said Lamorak, chafed. "If either for peace must quit this land, it shall be he, not you. He is intolerable."

"He has reason," said Durnor, "since if he is hard on me, he is far harder on himself. And now he is little likely to spare me, lest so himself he should be sparing. I choose to go."

So Durnor took his leave, self-exiled. Aglovale on that had some compunction. If his brothers required it, he said, he would himself enlighten Percivale.

"I would well you did," said Lamorak, hardly, "but that Sir Durnor has set his heart against it."

His brother's curst humours had worn his patience, but at that time he had no mind to go to extremes.

So for yet another year Aglovale had his way, and kept order in Galis, earning little praise and much hate because of his growing cruelty. He also aggrieved Northgalis, dealing with a high hand. After short warning to the King that he ruled remiss his borders, he waylaid transgressors and slew and hanged without ransom. And then he seized on all bridges,

and some he destroyed, and some he held by force, abating iniquitous tolls. Yet these violent doings must have been mainly righteous, since the King of Northgalis dared not urge out the dispute either in court or field; moreover, it appears that later Sir Tor bestirred himself to keep the bridges when his brother no longer might; and he was ever upright, passing true, and courteous.

Complaint against Aglovale grew so heavy that at last Lamorak called him to account.

"Within the realm of Logris," declared Aglovale, "no lands are more prosperous than is this your land of Galis; nor more secure; nor more free of evil customs. To this end have I served truly to the best of my power. Can any from the sea to the Usk prove injustice at my hands?"

"Your justice I do not question," said Lamorak, "but what of your mercy? I have heard of none. Sir Aglovale, have you ever shown mercy?"

"None," he said heavily. "You are qualified to show mercy; I may not."

"Brother, the best mercy I can show is to give relief from your justice. To Cardigan your appanage I will add as largely as you shall desire for your honour and content, but the rest of Galis shall do without your handling."

"I want no gift. The half of Galis would not honour and content me."

"Would aught else?"

"Your countenance and approval."

"That I cannot lend. I am sorry. You have hanged knights, you have dismembered, in abuse of your place and trust from my hand. I gave no warrant for your bloody code. I seek not to bring men to a shaveling pattern; and that shall be made known clearly, so that knights of worship and good fellowship may remain in the land and not avoid it. Therefore I require you to depart out of Galis for a season."

Aglovale was sorely shocked. "Out of Galis! Banishment!"

"You despise a kinder discharge I would provide."

"I care for no cloak to disgrace."

"I pray you remember that Sir Durnor of his own grace quitted Galis for peace."

Aglovale went down to Cardiff and took to the seas, and Percivale went with him still.

"Let him keep the boy," said Tor, "that for Percivale's sake he may not launch on iniquity."

How Aglovale kept the seas, and destroyed pests from the three channels, need not here be told at length. Before the year was round Percivale brought him into Cardiff, too perilously wounded to carry on to Cardigan; and there under ward of the Queen for weeks he lay.

He gathered life under heavy discouragement. Brose, with misplaced satisfaction, brought in to his master reports of disorder throughout Galis; his service of years had vanished like snow in a day and left no trace. Lamorak could not rule. Percivale brought Saint to his bedside to tell of King Arthur's coming to Cardiff on adventure, and of his ending of the wicked Annowre, and of his encounter unknown with Lamorak. Every look and word of the King she had treasured; and as she rehearsed Aglovale fevered to hear. But on his name no word or question had fallen to favour his return to his place at the Round Table. Lamorak, staying on his way to Kinkenadon, came in, and with sinister courtesy wished him speedy recovery. It was cruelly said. And with him came Durnor, loth and constrained, mumbling curses to himself, in fine dread of treading on his brother brought low. Those two, by opposite ways, afflicted their unhappy brother equally, for his nature was so curst. With the waste of six hard years of upright living lay loss by estrangement from Lamorak and Durnor.

Yet Aglovale deemed he should be granted comfort of God and man as he lay and watched Percivale. Again in the window-bay as of old, Percivale and Saint leaned close and talked low with one heart; he still gentle and meek and stainless in life and thought as she, in form and face almost as slender and delicate and fair. None seeing him would guess that like fine steel throughout he came through his brother's

hands.—This is my perfect work of the years ; this cannot waste or fail ; clear fire from on high has proved it. Notwithstanding this contentment, sudden tears would storm him merely at the sight of the brother and sister speaking eye to eye, without a shadow of doubt or reserve or dread between their white souls ; then would he turn his face to the wall and lie strangling, lest the innocent should chance to see how the damned do weep. So feeble he was then.

From his bed Aglovale took up resolution again. He sent to his brother Tor, who came kindly himself to answer, and would not leave him till his recovery. Of all his brothers, the bastard was he who could speak his mind frankly to him without afflicting. Fearless, honest, single-minded, Tor was wise also, wise as is best, from the heart ; and Aglovale by this time was willing to learn.

He let Aglovale understand how his hard ruling had tended to provoke present disorders, and how unwise had been his grasp of control single-handed ; he had not set men of worship, good and loyal, to exercise authority and spread respect of law.

“But in your day,” said Tor, sadly, “you would take no counsel, nor measure means. What profit to harrow over the past for barren cult ?”

Said Aglovale, suddenly, “Put case Sir Lamorak die without lawful issue, who, think you, should bear rule in Galis ?”

“Whomsoever he should will and appoint.”

“My birthright was set aside for Lamorak, and I gave consent and pledge to serve him ; but not any other after him. And so, brother, I warn you : not you, a bastard, nor Durnor, a fool and worse.”

Said Tor, “Are you setting for Percivale ?”

“No. I am setting for the weal of Galis and for the continuance of a noble line in time to come.”

“This is over early. Here be you four brethren, young and likely, though as yet unwed, to raise up lawful seed after you.”

“Lamorak will not wed, as he may not take to wife

Morgause of Orkney. Durnor breeds bastards. I shall die out and leave no life behind. Percivale, as he is, God keep him."

"Brother," said Tor, "I like not this setting for my part. Here also is barren cult."

Tor was all in the dark, and never guessed to what his brother was address, not even when Aglovale took ship and went to seek Lamorak on Kinkenadon Sands. None would he have with him when he landed, so Tor stayed aboard and from afar saw their meeting. Then he knew what he could not hear: Aglovale humbled himself to beg office again of his brother. And Lamorak, he saw, refused with anger; and refused and refused, as Aglovale doggedly followed when he turned from him, and would not be quitted. While day ran down the sky, Tor wished the dark to cover a sight so grievous and pitiful; and while summer night lay blind, he wished it gone, with his doubt that the pair were still wrestling on in the dark, up and down above the tides.

Dawn brought Aglovale back, dragging like one wounded. He showed Lamorak's sign and seal.

"Alas!" said Tor, "but there is no worship here on the getting or the giving."

"None, none!" said Aglovale, low of breath.

"You have done what I could not. Where is your sword? Ah, Sir Aglovale, let me in for comfort, as I am your father's son."

"Would to God I were the bastard! Sir Lamorak has granted to try me for another year, upon terms that I bear no arms in Galis, and lose no knight his life or limb. I have sworn. Eh, Tor! Nay, dam up your eyes. Why?" he laughed.

Yet even at that pass, Lamorak had cared for his unhappy brother, by those hard provisions desiring to compel his return to adventure outside Galis. When his reckoning proved short he hardened his heart and stood to the terms.

"He is starving at heart," said Tor.

"It is well," returned Lamorak; "I will starve him out of this curst temper."



But to the year's end Aglovale held out, and it was Lamorak who owned defeat; and very heartily he embraced his brother when he gave him back his sword without condition.

"Fair lord Sir Lamorak, if it please you to discharge me now, I promise you shall find begun a sounder order than before, and a good man to take in place of me."

"I have no will," said Lamorak, "to withhold from you full licence and countenance and approval. You can rule, fair brother, and I cannot: that is truth."

"You were not born to it," said Aglovale.

Lamorak knew well enough whom Aglovale considered a good man. This was Sir Hermind, their near cousin, an upright man and sturdy, body and mind; a sure knight by head and hand, quick of understanding and prudent in speech. He had served in the wars against Rome with his kinsmen of Galis, and they liked him well. From no fault of his, he had suffered an adverse turn very like Sir Aglovale's: his half-brother, Hermance of the Red City, had rewarded his loyal service with great injustice, banishing him at the instance of two base favourites from his lands in Northumbria. He whom I love so much tells how in the end King Hermance was murdered by those two villains, and how then Sir Hermind came, knightly and brotherly, to avenge his death and to bury him.

Aglovale by that bitter year of probation had won much, and namely the lasting esteem of a just and noble man; for Sir Hermind had seen with wonder how he spent himself for the weal of Galis, wise, diligent, patient, under disadvantage and through peril; and he had given himself freely to his help, and had never failed him since.

Percivale in that bitter year had won much, and namely he had won his brother's life against perilous hates that were out against him. Strict to the letter of his hard conditions, Aglovale wore no harness even for defence; and he would take no keep of himself, nor would he shun hazarding the life more precious to him than his own. Percivale and Brose

never left him. Time and time again he had to watch, and feel as women do, desperate fight in his defence rending his heart; though there was sweet joy to see how young Percivale fought and won worship. With rapture he fought for the brother he revered; in beautiful humility he looked for no praise; on success his heart was uplifted in love; his faith kept him without dread.

Surely he was perfect for knighthood.

Nacien the Hermit made such joy when they came to him that Aglovale was almost satisfied he recognized his brother's worth. Yet it was not joy that made the old man's eyes glisten when face to face alone he gave ear to his telling of Percivale.

"He is of perfect faith and a pure spirit. Every blow he gives yields praise to God, and every blow he takes yields prayer. Overthrow makes him no shame, and excellence no vainglory. He has slain no man, for the grace of God is in his hands. And he is a maiden clean of life and heart."

"And you, my son?" said Nacien.

"I—I hope. He is my warrant. I have none other. Ah God, none! Yet for seven years I have tried truly to serve God and man."

"God forsakes His true servants never."

"Sir, this I know: the Devil forsakes his servants never. Him I served, and I cannot get free. For ever he bids me break chastity, and ever he bids me resent humiliation; and as I do not, night and day, flesh and spirit must burn at his fires, for he is my master. Ah God, ah God, I get no ease! Lo, in Percivale how chastity and humility grow like flowers that are sweet to the sun. Lo, in me the same fume like scutch, and my own brothers let me know of evil odour."

Nacien, when he had examined them both and confessed them clean, marvelled over them; for one was so white of heart, and one so corrupt, and both in life were constant and clean and upright.

"The ground of all virtue the one of you owns: that is patience. The crown of all virtue the one of you yet lacks:



that is charity. My son, God may yet require more of your patience to learn your brother charity."

With dread Aglovale heard, deeming these words were prophecy of a thing he dared not face.

With dread heavy upon him he went down to Camelot to face King Arthur, and re-entered the streets by which he had gone out, barefoot and decried, seven years before. He whom I love so much tells how he sped then.

Hard at Aglovale looked the King, and coldly he asked him what he required.

"My lord, I require you to make this young squire a knight."

Beside his brother, Percivale showed strangely young and fair and slender for that request. He blushed for awe like a girl as the King looked hard at him in turn.

"Of what lineage is he come?" said Arthur.

"Sir, he is the son of King Pellinore that did you some time good service, and he is brother to Sir Lamorak de Galis the good knight."

"Well," said the King, "for what cause desire you that of me, that I should make him knight?"

For a moment Aglovale's answer hung, and Percivale, amazed, heard him catch his breath.

"Wit you well, my lord the King, that this young squire is brother to me as well as to Sir Lamorak. And my name is Aglovale."

In silence King Arthur mused awhile, gazing without a sign of recognition on his unwelcome knight. Percivale's heart dropped from the sky. He looked at his brother and quick away, ashamed to have seen. For Aglovale's face was like dark ash; sweat stood on his brow; his eyes were fixed and dead.

"Sir Aglovale," said Arthur, "for the love of Sir Lamorak, and for his father's love, he shall be made knight to-morrow. Now tell me his name."

"Sir, his name is Percivale de Galis."

Nothing passed between the brothers as they sought their lodging, till Percivale spoke with something of his old timidity.



"Hear me a question, brother."

"Yea, speak," said Aglovale, with a tight heart.

"Have you remembrance of your promise to send a spear to Sir Bors de Ganis?"

Aglovale looked his brother in the eyes; they were clear and steady. "Marry," said he, "that is well said."

Upon the morrow in due form Percivale was made a knight.

"I counsel you," said Arthur, "to seek the fellowship of noble knights of the pattern of your brother Sir Lamorak."

"Sir," said Percivale, low, "I would take the pattern of my brother Sir Aglovale."

Sir Mordred heard and laughed out, and for a jest he carried about that answer. Few at that hour deemed the young knight of good promise, for he was meek as a dove and showed no fire nor strength.

When the tables were set, Sir Kay the Seneschal took Percivale, and brought him to the lowest board among knights of poor degree, for so he said had the King commanded. And he said sinister, that he was loth thus to part them, yet unhappily Sir Aglovale had his place at the Round Table. For Sir Kay had been suckled churlish, that his courteous mother might nourish the babe Arthur.

Aglovale went on to his old place and sat down once more among his fellows, so sore at heart for Percivale's sake that he scarcely saw who saluted him and who did not. He was more forgotten than he knew, and more changed; old acquaintance had simple cause to pause, for trouble had seared and ravaged as much as twenty years.

He looked about him as the sieges filled up for the dinner. Some were covered and many were vacant. The Siege Perilous, that had never been filled, was covered in white; next to the right was one covered in black, where King Pellinore had sat; and the next that was Lamorak's was void. To the left the sieges filled. Sir Launcelot came in and sat down between Sir Bors de Ganis and Sir Ector de Maris. The sons of Lot were there. A stranger came and sat down on his



right in place of an old acquaintance, Sir Hervis de Revel ; on his other hand the siege was covered in black, for another, Sir Galagars, lately dead.

Then Aglovale beheld a maiden enter in clothing of white sendal, her visage pale with coming death, and radiant. A hush and murmur of pity passed along : " Alas ! it is the mute maid." Down the hall she went straight to Percivale, and took him by the hand ; and from her who had never uttered any word sprang speech loud and clear.

" Arise, Sir Percivale, the noble knight and God's knight, and go with me."

At that miracle deep silence ensued. And Percivale in noble simplicity rose and followed the maiden up the hall. Straight she brought him to the right side of the Siege Perilous, and stripped off the cover of black.

" Fair knight, take here thy siege," she said, " for this siege appertaineth to thee and to none other." Then she departed and went to be blessed for death.

Percivale sat and regarded none but his brother ; and Aglovale laughed for joy and thanked God aloud. Then the knight nearest Percivale leaned across the Siege Perilous and caught him by the hand ; and turning, he saw Sir Bors de Ganis, and joy rushed through him, for now they were fellows indeed. Of all those present, only the sons of Lot were not glad for the worship of Percivale.

For eight days the court of Arthur had been joyless and heavy, since Sir Tristram the noble knight had departed for Cornwall with his worst enemy King Mark, the fair-spoken, false coward. Now life and gladness renewed for the coming of Percivale with miracle, and lightly after dinner the King required his knights to take on their harness and prove their new fellow in breaking spears. So to a fair meadow beside Camelot they went down ; and there Sir Aglovale broke his spear with Sir Bors, and after encountered with Sir Dinadan, Sir Bruin le Noir, Sir Kay L'Estrange, Sir Sagwarides, and got no fall ; and there Sir Percivale broke many spears, and got no fall though great knights proved

him ; as namely, Sir Pelleas, Sir Bors, Sir Ector, Sir Gareth, Sir Bleoberis.

Said Sir Kay the Seneschal, "Lo now ! how softness and fat grow in an eight days, for these lean brothers of Galis so to hold their own."

Said Sir Dinadan, "Go prove if you be lean and hard enough."

On that Sir Kay took his spear, went into the range and required Sir Aglovale to just ; and so hard he smote him that he laid him backward upon his horse, broke his vizard, and bruised his face.

"Well," said Dinadan, "you have dealt unhandsomely with Sir Aglovale ; now go against Sir Percivale."

"By my faith, no !" said Kay. "As I am a man, I should be loth so to spoil the face of a pretty maid."

"Sir," said Percivale, "I had rather encounter your great spear than your mocks. And, sir, from knights that are named before you have I got no hurt."

"Yea, yea," said Kay, "that is sooth. Neither would I give you hurt ; and so, faith of my body ! I will not have ado with you this day. Well, well, Sir Bors," said Kay, "whom God favours should not man also favour ? Content you, Sir Percivale," said Kay, "your pattern brother Sir Aglovale got off lightly by favour in this same field years ago, and has been content for his part."

The sight of Aglovale's face strained grey drew Percivale past heeding Sir Kay.

At this day's end came Brose before Percivale, and with him a lad, who stood forward a suitor.

"Sir, for the sake of this day's worship will you to grant any man his reasonable asking ?"

"I will well to man or boy," said Percivale.

"Then, sir, grant me to serve you, even as my brother Brose serves Sir Aglovale."

Now, the boy's stature was so low for his years that his asking seemed scarce reasonable.

"Ah, Brose," said Aglovale, "you should have asked



this for yourself. And well I would Sir Percivale had the best squire that ever I tried ; and to no other master I would speed you willingly."

"Sir, I want no other. Sir, favour Bennet my brother ; he is well conditioned and better nurtured than I."

Sir Aglovale denied him shortly. "He is young and untried, and asks presumptuous. Sir Percivale shall not take him by my counsel till he be grown and trained. But he shall send him to the Queen at Cardiff, and request her to enter him in her household that he may grow for a twelvemonth ; and afterwards I myself will take him and try him till he be fit to serve Sir Percivale."

In sore disappointment Brose broke out insolent, "To take and try him as me you took and tried a twelvemonth ! God defend !"

Straightway Percivale refused Bennet till he should have satisfied Sir Aglovale. Brose muttered and eyed his master resentfully.

"I kept my mouth fairly enough at that time, and ever since till now : yet not a good word for the asking. What a fool am I !"

At this temper and language Aglovale a little smiled, sure enough of his man, and passed it without rebuke.

"Be not aggrieved," said Percivale kindly to the boy. "Though I cannot now please you, I promise you I will take you and none other so soon as you are fit, for sole reason and sufficient that you came first suitor on my knighthood."

Brose was sore and angry, deeming that had he and his master kept from words Bennet's suit might have prospered. After Sir Aglovale's example, he had set his heart on his young brother, and had promised himself to take him, and make him, and bring him on to a better state than his own. And he had set his faith strongly on the luck of the day that should bring Percivale to the Round Table. On such a day he had sued and had won his master ; he took him with a blow and a curse, yet he took him. You shall repent, said Brose ; and he, in time,—I do repent. Yet he could deny him on such a day his

claim to favour, and set Sir Percivale to deny Bennet. The man's resentment did not lightly pass; for many days by sullenness and negligence he reminded his master of the grudge he held. But Aglovale with singular patience bore with him, and when Percivale wondered he excused him, "Great is his love for his young brother."

As for Bennet, he took his disappointment with a better grace, and departed speedily for Cardiff charged with messages to the Queen that should gladden her with news of Sir Percivale. By the way Sir Tor and Sir Durnor met him, and hearing his tidings, turned aside to rejoice with their brothers.

"Alas! but where is Sir Lamorak?" said Durnor. "He should be here; all five at once to sit down at the Table Round. We sons of Pellinore, five; those sons of Lot, five. Man for man, I warrant we five could knock the worth of those five. And they know it."

Truly they knew it; and therefore, fresh edged, the four that were murderers, Gawaine, Gaheris, Agravaine, and Mordred, took up a settled purpose. Already in these terms they had counselled and agreed: "This Sir Lamorak," said Gawaine, "we slew his father King Pellinore, who slew our father King Lot; and for the despite of Pellinore, Sir Lamorak did us a shame to our mother. Therefore I will be revenged." And his three brethren: "Let see how you will or may be revenged and you shall find us ready." And Sir Gawaine: "Hold you still and we shall espy our time."

Now again they heard Sir Gawaine in counsel: "Let us send and fetch our mother here to this castle beside Camelot; and when she is here, soon will Sir Lamorak be here also. And truly he will think well by her coming here that King Arthur has bidden her, meaning to overrule in her marriage. Then may we see our time when he goes to her privily, and slay him as we slew his father." So they planned murder.

Matched man to man King Pellinore had not died; and man to man they never laid to meet any one of Pellinore's sons afterwards. Yet they lacked not valour, not the worst of them; but they were passing vindictive, and bloodthirsty men.



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So far as can be known, Sir Lamorak never beheld his young brother a knight; certainly they never sat side by side at the Round Table to fill up the joy of Aglovale. For first King Arthur removed from Camelot and sojourned awhile at Caerlion upon Usk beside Galis; and after Sir Percivale went into Cornwall on a Quest that was long and arduous, to deliver Sir Tristram. For King Mark, after his nephew Tristram had saved him from his enemies, broke the faith he had sworn on a book before King Arthur and all his knights, and made away with him, so that none knew whether he were prisoned or dead.

My most dear Master tells how Percivale sped. By his knightly means Sir Tristram was found and delivered, and Cornwall eased of insurgent wars; and afterwards he confronted Mark and admonished him in clear simplicity of heart.

Said Mark, "I may not love Sir Tristram who loveth my Queen and wife La Beale Isoud."

Said Percivale, "Ah, fie for shame, never say so. Are you not uncle to Sir Tristram, and he your nephew. Never think that so noble a knight as Sir Tristram is would do himself so great a villainy to hold his uncle's wife. Howbeit," said Percivale, "he may love your Queen sinless because she is called one of the fairest ladies of the world."

So he spoke in all sincerity, as he knew no worse and was slow to think evil. Well might his fellow-knights wonder over such an one, casting thought that he was brother to Sir Aglovale. In the event his good words were not justified, nor his easy trust to the promises of King Mark. For as soon as he was gone out of Cornwall, Mark plotted afresh; he set his Queen, La Beale Isoud, as a lure for Sir Tristram, and took him again prisoner. He in turn was betrayed to prison by La Beale Isoud, and she fled the kingdom with her lover Tristram.

Another manner of ending came of the like luring of Lamorak by means of Queen Morgause. He whom I love so much has told us that tale. Sir Lamorak came indeed, and

with the Queen, unarmed, Sir Gaheris surprised him. With drawn sword and all armed came in Gaheris. He caught his mother by the hair and struck off her head.

Cried Lamorak, "Ah, why have you slain the mother that bore you? With more right you should have slain me."

Said Gaheris, "Because thou art unarmed I am ashamed to slay thee. But wit thou I shall slay thee. And now my mother is quit of thee."

So Lamorak went forth alive, bloodstained and shamed by the death of that fair Queen he loved.

All this and more of the same may be read in that tale. And also, elsewhere, more of the noble battles of Sir Lamorak : how he fought Sir Palamides the Saracen, and after promised to love him above all his brothers, excepting his half-brother Tor ; how secretly he encountered the sons of Lot and put them to the worse ; how to Surluse he came on a sudden and shone at his last tournament ; how for the sake of Arthur he revenged the overthrow of these his nephews ; how then King Arthur vainly entreated, "Oh, Lamorak, abide with me, and by my crown I shall never fail thee ;" and last, how he parted from Launcelot weeping and bewept, and rode away alone.

He was seen alive never again. Pierced villainously back and breast, his dead body witnessed to a foul battle. He had lived not twenty-nine years. Men deemed his great renown was yet increscent.

By the mouth of Palamides praising the dead, Percivale heard the tidings, and he swooned for sorrow.

"Alas ! my good and noble brother Sir Lamorak now shall we never meet," said Percivale. "In all the wide world a man might not find such a knight as he was of his age. It is too much to suffer the death of our father King Pellinore, and now the death of our good brother Sir Lamorak."

As for Aglovale, he almost died for sorrow. That strange physical affliction recurred ; old wounds opened and bled as though in his members he were weeping blood for his brother. Most lamentable, the wound in his side that Lamorak had



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touched to heal broke afresh. "Ah, Lamorak!" cried Aglovale, in great distress. Brose feared for his wits, and he deemed it was only the timely presence of Percivale that brought him sane alive.

As for Durnor, within a month, slain by unknown hands, the body of Durnor was found wanting burial.



## CHAPTER VIII

**M**Y most dear Master in his books does now and again set down times and places somewhat at random ; and so for the next record of Aglovale time is out of gear, and the interlock of many parts passes all skill to readjust. Some of the story of Sir Percivale is lost ; but what remains tells that he endured meekly some scorns, maybe on account of his pattern brother, maybe on account of his maiden life and his maiden sword ; for as yet, though his fame budded fair, he had slain man never. According to my most dear Master, the madness of Launcelot befell about this time ; and when he was lost, King Arthur, at the instance of Queen Guenever, desired Sir Aglovale and Sir Percivale, with Sir Gawaine and others, to take upon them to seek him throughout all England, Wales, and Scotland.

Now shall be told how it came to pass that Aglovale soon forfeited the King's grace, and came at last to despair and living death.

Three and twenty knights went out of Camelot on the quest of Sir Launcelot, and shortly departed to all quarters of the realm of Logris. Gawaine went north with his kin, and the two brothers of Galis turned west to search their own land and the Marches.

Now for the last time Aglovale and Percivale ride together.

Of the woes awaiting them, the first they met at Cardiff. There in piteous case they found the Queen their mother, whose grief for the death of Lamorak had put her from reason. With fond words, used to them in childhood, she

claimed her sons and chid their absence ; she bewept herself, as but now newly widowed ; she remembered recent woe with a great cry, "Lamorak is dead—is dead!" and refused comfort.

"Ah, my dear sons, when your father was slain he left me four sons, of the which now be twain slain ; and for the death of my noble son Sir Lamorak shall my heart never be glad."

Now one and now the other she implored never to leave her more. Such equal eager love had not blessed her first-born for long years. Also King Pellinore's likeness in him, begrudged to him for shame, now gratified the poor Queen, as when she was first a mother. By the death of Lamorak came so much favour to Aglovale. For dear grief he had no voice to speak, and it was Percivale who denied her prayer.

"Ah, sweet mother, we may not. We be come of king's blood of both parties, and therefore it is our kind to haunt arms and noble deeds."

She kneeled down before her sons at their going, and complained and clung with frantic grief. Round Percivale she locked her arms, babbling her dread of the treasons of the House of Lot ; how but by treason had King Pellinore died, and Lamorak, who of knighthood had but few fellows.

Then came the maiden Saint to release her brother, and so spoke her noble heart that she prevailed. Swooning, the Queen fell away, and her sons departed then, never to see her more.

The second woe was not slow to follow. From Cardiff a devil possessed Brose brewing mischief of his love to his young brother Bennet. For Sir Aglovale, on review, again refused to favour the lad and shorten his probation that had but two months to run. The man's exasperation grew under the patience of his master, and he pushed far in insolent misconduct.

"Let him be awhile, Percivale ; he is sore. He loves well that little brother. I need not cure him ; he will mend."

Up the valley of the Usk they rode, crossed the river at eve and found lodging. The day was tuned by the harvest

reaping, the night by thunder muttering from the Black Mountains. All next day the thunder boomed as they left the cornlands and made for the North Marches; and the heavens were black with coming tempest when they stayed for harbourage with a courteous gentleman.

Now, Percivale had not entered with Aglovale, but was still without, when downhill came one riding at speed; and he wondered when he knew him for Bennet. Breathless and eager the boy came up to him, and delivered a message of greeting from the Queen; and then he ungirt his coat, and took from round his body chains of gold, sent by her to serve them for spending.

"How now!" said Percivale. "Are you wounded?"

"Sir," said Bennet, flushing, "I lay last night with a mixed company, and two rogues spied out what I bore, and in a wood awaited me and set upon me. Yet, sir, as you see, I sped well enough."

Then, as Percivale commended him heartily, "Sir," he said, "if you deem I deserve, speak for me now to my lord Sir Aglovale, that he suffer me now to follow him, so to fit me to follow and serve you."

"I will well," said Percivale, and took the boy up with him to a chamber where Sir Aglovale with Brose was about to unarm. But when Aglovale had heard Bennet's errand and request, suddenly he asked him at what time he set out from Cardiff.

Said Bennet, hastily, "Yester noon—a little after."

"At what pace did you ride, then? I see your horse down there reeking."

"Sir, I made what speed I might. Sir, as you know, I was hindered."

Bennet fronted Sir Aglovale's gaze steadily, but it chanced that lightning showed how his nerves were strung.

"Show your wound."

Very readily the boy unbound his arm and presented a gash to view. Sir Aglovale took him by the hand and examined silently. Thunder was a relief on the hush.

"At what time fell this mishap?"

"About prime."

Aglovale took from him the binding, and examined the bright bloodstains. Bennet would have withdrawn his hand, but it was gripped harder. When questioned closely concerning his defence he answered briskly, but as the dreaded Sir Aglovale scrutinized his countenance he began to cast looks aside to Brose and Sir Percivale. The cruel hawk face darkened as the frightened boy paled.

"It is a lie," said Aglovale.

Not a word could Bennet utter. Only thunder spoke.

In ruthless temper Aglovale tightened his savage hold till the boy winced and panted. Brose saw the wrung fingers oozing red at the tips, and began to choke and to curse.

"Brose, is this of your contrivance?"

"No," said Bennet, "no."

"I shall have much to teach you," said Aglovale, grimly, "as Brose can warn you, before ever I pass you to serve on Sir Percivale."

"Speak!" said Percivale, "if you be not the low cheat you look."

Brose stood by his brother and lifted his voice in defiance.

"Bennet," he cried, "is not the first you have known, O my lord, to devise on himself a wound for getting at a service he desired! I—you—have known that done before."

"Ah, mercy!" gasped the boy, twisting.

Sir Aglovale let him go, and turned upon Brose. "What you have to say, say quickly."

"Low cheat," growled Brose. "Low cheat. Sir Percivale named Bennet low cheat."

"Fair brother," said Aglovale, "question the boy—you. Have out the truth."

He went pacing to and fro while Percivale took confession from Bennet. Brose listened scowling, watching his goaded master, but he said nothing more.

"Be content," then said Aglovale, "that you are yet in the Queen's service, not in mine. Get you back for payment on

unfaithfulness and negligence in discharge of your errand. You should be in no case for riding had you such payment as I would grant you; for I let you know your portion of stripes should be doubled because you practised for your own ends. And I let you know—you, Brose—that he should be paid at your hands. Since you are so forward to advance the boy, I will teach you to cure him."

Blood rushed up the face of Brose. "Sir," he said thickly, "an you let me know you can play the devil, I let you know I can too! Enforce me, and I let you know I can also enforce you, maugre your head, to cure your brother Sir Percivale of calling 'low cheat' on Bennet."

At that, "I doubt you not!" said Aglovale, and therewith struck with all his weight and felled Brose. The blow was barbarous, iron-gloved, laying open the man's cheek.

"Read my token! Since I must needs make of you an example before your brother, read my token!"

Brose was mastered. He stood up broken to sullen shame.

"Sir Percivale shall hear aught that you can plead for your young brother. Speak it out, Brose."

"Sir, not now," faltered the boy; "rather do I go back on my asking as unreasonable."

"Rather as you like not the wage of cheating and lying."

"My lord, not so! I have stomach for all. What Brose can take, that can I, deserved or undeserved."

"An that be honestly said, Bennet," said Aglovale, "I am content to hold to terms, with promise that at need you shall get your fill."

"Then I, too," said Percivale, "do confirm my promise, albeit not gladly."

"Bind up both your hurts, and quickly, for Bennet shall amend his negligence with all despatch."

Neither ventured a word of appeal, though the quickening thunder uttered cause. Bennet learned two messages: one for the Queen to her comfort, and desiring her blessing on her sons; one for the seneschal to his own discomfort, desiring punishment. Then he went.

Brose turned without a word and kneeled to unarm his master. Then entered that gentleman, their host, to speak in Bennet's behoof that he should stay, because of the passing day, and the great near storm, and because, he said, the ways were not cleared of evil customs.

"Ah, my lord," muttered Brose at Aglovale's knee, "he is but young."

Aglovale would not relent; but he closed with an offer for a change of horse. So shortly Brose heard hoofs go below, and beheld the wan, unhappy face of Bennet upturned; and as he went about his master, anon far off saw the horse shying at the lightning, and anon higher against the gulf of the sky saw the boy pass away, as great drops dashed the casement.

About midnight the great fury of the storm abated; lightning turned to lambent sheets, thunder to distant growls, rain ceased. In the quiet pauses, Brose, from his pallet by the door, heard the deep breathing of Sir Aglovale asleep. Then he saw Sir Percivale rise up softly from his place, and come to stand beside his brother and contemplate his face by the play of the sheet lightning. So standing in his shirt, his youthful beauty so illumed, Brose likened him to a heavenly warder, even to the chief Saint Michael. He likened himself, and a little writhed. Then Percivale kneeled down beside Aglovale and prayed a great while, and went again and lay down. What this might betoken Brose dreaded to know; yet he had a deeming and becursed his tongue.

Riding on their way when morn was at prime, they came to a ford of the Wye hard by a castle standing above a slope. There they passed by a churchyard, where stood many round about a corpse lapped for burial, while men broke the sodden ground for a grave. Sir Aglovale stayed to question, and one came forward to answer.

"Fair knight, here lies a squire shamefully slain this night."

"How was he slain?"

"Sir, the lord of this castle lodged this squire this night, and because he said he was servant to a good knight that is

with King Arthur, whose name is Sir Aglovale, therefore the lord commanded to slay him, and for this cause is he slain."

With a cry Brose danged down to the grave, caught away covering, and gave to sight the face of Bennet, and the wounds hacked over his body, and his dead eyes.

The stranger women and men fell aweeping for pity of the man, agape and huddled, and moaning over the dead lad on his knees.

"Jesu God!" whispered Percivale, with a sob, "help us quick and dead."

Aglovale gazed stock still. "Gramercy," he said at last, "and ye shall see his death revenged lightly, for I am that same knight for whom this squire was slain."

Straight he lighted down and Percivale also; they charged men with their horses, and together mounted the slope and came to the courtyard and gates of the castle.

Said Aglovale to the porter, "Go to your lord, and tell him that I am Sir Aglovale for whom this squire was slain this night."

Word ran throughout the castle, and presently, while they waited in the court, a fierce damsel looked out from a window above. "Soho, Sir Aglovale, otherwise Sir Sinister!" she called; and he, looking up, met shameful memories in a face he knew once. She spat upon him, and used other names, and terms that made Percivale's ears tingle.

"Now," she said, "I give you to know that for my sake will my lord Sir Goodewin add dishonour to death, and will give a portion from that your carcase for my dog to eat. And in hell remember me. Lo, here is your death."

Then Sir Goodewin came out, ready armed, all the knights of his household at his back.

"Which of you," he said, "is Sir Aglovale?"

"Here am I," said Aglovale. "For what cause have you slain this night my mother's squire?"

"I slew him because of you, for you slew my brother Sir Gawdelin."

"As for your brother, I avow it. I slew him, for he was a false knight, and a betrayer of ladies and of good knights."

At that the damsel overhead lifted hateful laughter against him, and those below echoed it.

"For the death of my squire," said Aglovale, "you shall die."

"For the death of my brother," said Sir Goodewin, "you shall die."

Without more words they went to strokes. And presently Percivale went to strokes also, for the damsel's naming and scorns, taken up by those below, drove him wild; and fiercely he defied all, and fought all that would stand. For the first time in his life he fought wickedly, without prayer, with savage will to slay, and joy over the slain. Three lay dead, and the rest fled wounded, while still Sir Aglovale and Sir Goodewin fought together. At her window the damsel danced and cursed, watching the fray, till Sir Goodewin fell past rising, and Aglovale unlaced his helm; then frantic she cried for grace.

He died as a valiant man; with no vain prayer for mercy, but a curse on his slayer, he faced the stroke that took off his head. Then were all the windows silent.

Aglovale stood and regarded his brother and the dead men. "Slain! Percivale, you have slain!"

For answer Percivale came and embraced him, and said only, "Fair, dear brother!" over and over again, with a kind of passion.

Aglovale groaned, "Alas! alas!" for he knew so that for his sake Percivale had slain, and for cause unrighteous.

By the half-turned sods sat Brose, still holding the dead lad, taking no heed of going and coming.

Aglovale spoke hoarse, "Brose, now is your brother's death avenged."

The man lifted an intolerable stare, bared his teeth, and cried, "On whom?"

Aglovale was knocked out of words, and Percivale shed tears of pity and gall.



"Alas! poor Bennet!" said he. "God rest his soul! He paid dear for an untrue word."

Brose, in his anguish, fetched out a laugh against his master, so like the damsel's that Percivale's blood curdled and spun.

"He paid for me!" said Aglovale. "Ah, God, for me!"

"Provide my brother his grave," said Brose, "you who provided his death."

"It is due. Charge me according to your grief."

"Not here; not lonely! My lord Sir Aglovale, you have provided death and burial for better than he. It were meet to give him a little room on that same ground. I would have him wait Doomsday there."

"So be it," said Aglovale, heavily. "Nor will I lie down nor break fast till this be done."

Afterwards, when Brose came to open speech with Percivale, he vowed that, however he had said and done contrary, he had never departed from the great love and worship he bore his unhappy master.

"I willed to cut him out of my heart, seeing how he was the cause of Bennet's death, and how he had used him harshly—and I could not. God knows how sore I was rent. God knows if I gave worse hurt than I got. Look back, sir, now, on that dolorous road we paced to the burial of Bennet: all those two days my master bore with me, never lifting look or word of resentment, though I did not spare to add to his affliction, and surely the Devil lent me the wit for it. I did not spare! for Bennet's sake I would not; dead, he claimed me to be wholly his brother. Yet found I no deliverance from love and worship. Ah, my master! In all the world there is none like him—none!"

Near by a certain forest crossway a little chapel had been builded since the days of Sir Turquine, where a good man served with orisons. There the body of Bennet had lodging and pious watching for the night.

Forth went Aglovale to that purlieu of his old villainy, to stand out the night against his sins. There breathed he, sentinel till morn, the heavy scents of elder-blossom, while night birds



flitted to and fro, and night beasts harried by moonlight. Ever, as he stared down fatal roads, before him in ghostly presence went along, wounded and bound, one who had trusted to him, whom he had deserted, and betrayed to miserable death.

He never knew that two kept secret vigil with him. Percivale apart, down on his knees, down on his face, wept his prayers. Brose apart, sweated hot and cold, as the blood of brotherhood revolted against the master he so fiercely loved.

By another night, those three unhappy souls were come with the body of Bennet to a certain Priory, where Aglovale answered at the gate as of old. There, while interment was made in good order, with many candles and requiem, Pecivale in the midst sank down, overborne by heavy sleep; for he was young and unused to grief, and he for two nights had never slept. When he woke he was couched as aforetime, and the bed beside was all unpressed as then.

Aglovale waited on the waking of Brose. "Take now relief," he said, "and quit me. Your brother's blood is so against me. If so be you will turn to serve my brother Sir Percivale, freely I commend you one to the other, and will myself depart."

Brose, in his heart, was dismayed, but he answered ruthless.

"That were no relief: Sir Percivale spoke foul on Bennet. He holds that he died by a braggart lie, nor excuses how he spoke of no bad intent, weening to have been forborne on your name."

"Brose, I cannot bury your brother's faults."

"You will not."

At that time there was long silence. Then Aglovale said, "See you to it. Say what you need to Sir Percivale."

Though the man's heart was wretched to see the fierce affliction he bestowed, he kept a relentless mask.

"An I said enough, Sir Percivale would slay me as he has slain others for your worship."

"God forbid!" groaned Aglovale. His brother's blood-guilt pressed fort and dure on his conscience.

The wretched man went on. "Against the truth you have forged your worship on my face for him to read. Lord! for low cheating that was a bold stroke!"

"Ah, Brose," cried Aglovale, and as the man avoided his eye, ashamed of that vile speech, he gripped his hand confidently. "Sure am I your heart is not so base as your tongue."

Body and spirit, Brose struggled from the terrible hold and got free. His hand bore the imprint of Aglovale's unconscious strength. He showed it, a fellow to poor Bennet's, with a cruel taunt.

"So me, too, you have something to teach, before ever you pass me to serve on Sir Percivale!"

His heart died within him to see how that blow went home.

"You do beat me with thorns, Brose, all naked," breathed Aglovale.

"Pay me what I deserve," cried Brose, choking, "and dismiss me!"

But so soon as that utterance of remorse escaped him, he saw it obverse, and thanked the powers of hell.

"Take your dues," cried Aglovale. "Bury your brother's faults under mine. Decry me to my brother Sir Percivale, and I will be your warrant that he shall not slay you."

Brose locked his teeth against his heart, and turned his face to the wall, till a wicked interpretation came to his tongue.

"Ho, forsooth! he muttered, facing about, you will be warrant that *he* shall not slay me! Yea, doubtless, and will swear to it by your sword!" His bad conscience took home the thing from his mouth, and almost he believed it.

The visage of Aglovale was distorted and hideous as he gnawed his trembling lips; for his strength was broken, with trouble and long fast from sleep and food.

Then entered Percivale, and stood at gaze on his brother. The hilts of his sword Aglovale took with his two hands to hold upright.

"Speak, Brose!" he cried.

Then the forest night swam in upon him, so charged with the heavy scent of elder-blossom that he stifled and lost his

senses. Over him the eyes of Percivale and Brose met once, but not one word was spoken till he came to himself. The sound of "My lord" and "Fair brother" told him then his hour was not yet come.

Now, as these records do not hereafter follow Percivale in the Quest of the Grail, there may be no fitter place than this to set down a transcript from another book, where he unlocks his heart to his sister Saint. My most dear Master tells how the maiden came to Galahad, Percivale, and Bors; how she led them on the Quest and enlightened them with her strange, high wisdom; and how she girt Galahad with the sword of King David by a girdle of her own hair. In that place there is mention made of three spindles, white, green, and red, as grown from innocency, and seed-shedding, and blood-shedding.

She said, "The white betokens Sir Galahad, and the green Sir Bors, and the red—alas, brother! alas—the red!"

"Ah me!" said Percivale; "would to God I had not this part of the Tree of Knowledge! Ah, sister, it is a fearful thing to shed blood of life."

He told her all then, and together they pondered over the symbol of sin.

"Lo!" said Percivale, "those I had slain were not put to silence. I heard their breath speak out of the lips of others; I saw their looks mock out of the eyes of others; the life that was gone from their bodies was but draughted to enliven fresh matter. In every ray of light, in every gust that blew, the life of the dead moved to confound me. Ah, Saint, the things they had uttered were black and heavy; I could not bear them."

"Yet, brother, had you never heard evil-speaking before, and opposed it?"

"Often, so often that my ears were dulled. Soon as I was made knight, I myself, without offence, even in the fellowship of the Round Table, was shamefully bespoken and belied. Lightly I bore it then, seeing how Aglovale had ever borne the like unmoved. Till Brose opened against him, and he struck him down, whole-hearted did I love and worship, clear of doubt."

"Ah, fair fool brother!"

"He never fooled me by a word; nor did any but through silence, excepting Brose and Durnor. Brose lied to me more than once, as he has since confessed. Through him I came to think a shameful record, unfit for light, concerned Durnor. And Durnor never denied. Once he overheard, and in wrath laid hands on Brose, but he did not deny. Ah, sister, his wrong charity! After he had done with Brose, he caught me, and held me before him awhile, eyeing me hard with a fallen countenance. Maybe I shrank visibly, though what had come to me was but a weak, vague shadow of the truth. At that he was angry, and cursed and railed at me. Then he besought me not to measure out love too nicely. I said I would try. Then he charged me for kindness not to bring up a brother's misdeeds before Aglovale, because he was a hard man, who would make no excuse, who would speak no word for loss and misfortune and sudden and fierce temptation, who would not lay right stress on true penitence, who would mention no good deeds as against the ill. I said Aglovale was just. 'Be more than just,' said Durnor, 'for those who deserve love least do need it most.' His eyes were wet.

"Ah, Durnor! would to God I had loved you more while you were man alive! Sister, night and night again he haunts my sleep, and makes his plea that was for Aglovale. With broken speech and full eyes he asks for a little more loving kindness, and I can reach him no answer. Oh, dear, stammering tongue, dear trustful eyes; oh, big, loyal heart, all gone to dust!

"Aglovale was not kind to him—Aglovale, for whom he was so forspent, who for my sake misgave and wronged him—for my sake, as I deem.

"Sister Saint, I am all unfit for the Quest of the Holy Grail. Strange doubts trouble me that I know not good from evil. For lo! Durnor was an evil liver and gross, and I my fellows call stainless; yet have I not to offer so golden a deed as his generous untruth. Lo, Aglovale! Through long years he laboured for righteousness against a corrupted nature; and



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Durnor's reckless grace played free ; yet Aglovale's hard virtue wavers in the balance. I doubt it is but vanity to keep from evil and do right, when a word unsaid, from mere ignorance, from mere blindness, may happen to load the heart with remorse. And I doubt I might be a better man had I been a more sinful."

Saint made answer, "Be not downcast, Percivale. Surely the Devil, seeing that you win charity, does assail your faith."

## CHAPTER IX

**M**Y most dear Master tells that the Quest of Launcelot led to Cardigan, without any mention of days or ways.

If it drew in regular circuit through the North Marches, in all likelihood indications rife and strong beat in upon Percivale; for in those regions Aglovale, during his worst years, was well known under another name. Brose, in the day of remorse, denied this, claiming to be sole causer of the woe ensuing. Doubtless he played his wretched part, keeping up his devil's game.

Now came the night at Cardigan. Percivale lay down to sleep, but for trouble of heart he could not. A new fear possessed him that day; for, so strange and fierce were his brother's looks, now fixed, now wild, that he had come to doubt for his reason. Presently, as he lay, he heard in the quiet of night the heavy halt paces of Aglovale pass, and return, and die again. And again, renewing aimless roamings, they sounded on the court below, passing to vacant chambers that Percivale had seen to be sad with faded vestiges of a gentle woman's occupation. Also he had seen a tomb enisled, where upon a stone sill was carven, cubit long, the figure of a slender lady, lying with head turned away. Aglovale had answered, "She died by great villainy," and by the way he took hold of his sword-hilts, and by his stern countenance, Percivale deemed that vengeance still delayed.

Again the tread repassed, and Percivale began to drowse, when he was aware that one entered softly.

"Who comes?"

"A sinner named Aglovale."

"Wherefore, brother?"

Aglovale stood beside him, breathing deep.

"Percivale, give me leave to lie by you. In my bed I find no sleep."

Amazed and moved beyond measure, Percivale made room. "I will well," he said, and lifted to embrace Aglovale as he lay down by his side.

"You burn fevered."

"It will pass with sleep. These last nights I have found no sleep."

Percivale sank down again choking. Aglovale, who never in all his life had asked for his help or his affection, was come to him in need of comfort; of such primitive comfort as in childhood little Saint used to seek in his bed. He breathed benediction and lay still.

The heavy sighs of Aglovale died down to tranquil breath as he drew remedy from the sensible presence of his beloved brother. But Percivale drew malease, and fevered in sore disquiet and trouble of mind. His great pity swelled against restraint, yet the ponderous minutes loaded his diffident heart with dread of trespass; and with a greater dread, monstrous, unnameable, steeped in blood of his shedding. Lord Jesu, friend us! he prayed inwardly. Thou who knowest his sorrow, guide me for his comfort.

Scarcely above his breath Percivale spoke. "Brother, do you sleep?"

As low Aglovale answered, "No." Doubtless he knew his hour was come.

Percivale lifted and sat with his head bowed to his knees, and the dreadful night drifted a moment while he prayed.

"Aglovale, what is it that I do not know?"

The dreadful night drifted a moment while Aglovale prayed.

"Me," he said. "Me, naked and loathsome."

"Ah, fair, dear brother!" cried Percivale. "Fair, dear brother!"

Then said Aglovale, "I shall need your silence, Percivale, till I be done."



"Doubt not me. Until you bid I will not speak," said Percivale in faithful subjection.

Then began the shameful avowal of Aglovale. Still as coffined clay he lay, and as from the ribs of death heaved his voice, as in order and exactly he delivered the tale of his iniquities from the first wild lapses of his youth through all the secret dark passages of abominable years.

"Yet not this, and not this," he said, "has been cried throughout the land against my worship."

That night deep beyond deep of sin opened on the sight of maiden Percivale. So gross, so foul, so infamous a record outpassed the measures of his simple knowledge. Rank words and unfamiliar forced a way to his understanding, till shame of mere hearing burnt over him, while he shivered for dread. He knit his hands upon his mouth, and so held mute to hear.

Well did Aglovale know that he spoke to the ear of one above measure severe and intolerant of evil. Through long years he himself had trained and tempered his brother to this hard excellence, and he had the heart now to endure the outcome. He took no keep to spare Percivale or to spare himself. Triumphant pride in his perfect work took him even in that hour.

That telling was not brief. Misdeed and crime, in separate shape, in dense procession, marched on the night, Aglovale still repeating, "Not this, and not this has been cried throughout the land against my worship." Then his published villainy he told.

His published villainy he told most fully; how it was made known, he told; how he was shamed and scorned and near unknighly death, he told; how he was enforced to hard penance, he told. On the rest was silence. For a hard man he was, who would make no excuse, who would speak no word of loss and misfortune and sudden and fierce temptation, who would not lay right stress on true penitence, who would mention no good deeds as against the ill.

The dreadful night drifted awhile. Still sat Percivale, with his head bowed to his knees, and still as coffined clay

lay Aglovale. The wretched man spoke his last to his brother.

Brokenly he said, "Go to, Percivale; I have done with you. Whatsoever you have the heart to utter, ah, dear brother, doubt not I have the heart to approve."

From Percivale came a shuddering sigh, but no word; and Aglovale lay quiet, without appeal.

Presently Percivale, with shaking hands, felt about his brother's head; he signed the damp brow with the cross, and leaning down kissed him on the brow.

Aglovale turned upon his face, drew cover over his head, and terrible sobs shook the bed.

Alas for such comfort! As the saint the sinner had Percivale kissed his head. Not so a true brother had kissed him on the cheek, with staunch affection in the day of dishonour. Dead Durnor got his due: for him he wept in agony of longing and regret after the love he had so lightly regarded and poorly returned.

Alas for Percivale! He had no strength to wring one word, he had no spring for tears. The stifed sobs of Aglovale pierced him for pity, but brought no outrush of loving-kindness. Memories were also knocking at his heart: of the Miserere vigil, of midnight sobbing under Nacien, when he in tender respect had shrunk from knowledge to tears. Further back he remembered, how great sobs like these had answered when he had vowed love to him disinherited. Still he sat stunned and stricken, and could utter no word of comfort.

Aglovale expected none now. He had received token enough to dispense with courses of speech. He had finished with suspense. The bed shook with lengthening pauses as the rest of sheer exhaustion took hold of his trouble. Waves of oblivion swept his brain, and heavy with the reservation of outworn nights, stupendous sleep drenched his senses.

About midnight Percivale was aware of pale light in the chamber at the rising of a waning moon, and he prayed for thick darkness to keep his face awhile from his brother's eyes. And then he perceived how sleep prevented. Quick and hard

then worked his breath. He withdrew himself softly from his bed-fellow and stood out upon the floor. Scarcely could he keep upright, for he was weak and dizzy as one first rising after wounds. Within the window lay pieces of his harness, lighted to silver. These and his sword he essayed to take, but forbore, lest under his shaking hands the metal should clash to waken the sleeper.

Profound was the slumber of Aglovale. Percivale kneeled down by his bedside, and piteously he besought Heaven's pardon and keep for that grievous sinner. Down the pillow stole patches of wan light, played from the surface of his shield; a lax hand showed, and then the dreadful mask half prone. In every line and hollow the imprint of evil was legible at last to eyes that before had spelled in vain on mystery. Percivale rose and went out soft-foot, with never a backward look.

Brose was sleeping by the door of his master's vacant chamber. He started up at a touch, and all bedazzled he heard bewildered the voice of Percivale.

"Rise and make ready, Brose, for you and I will ride away secretly."

Then he saw the face of Percivale, and his heart stood still. "He knows, and my master is undone."

Once before he had looked on such a face. One dawn, long years ago, a young damsel crept forth from Sir Aglovale's bed to find one sweeter; and he stood and let her pass unhindered, so daunting was the sight of her stricken countenance as straight she went to her last bed.

Now, in remorse, Brose recognized the outcome of his own accursed game of betrayal, and knew not what to do to stay the cruel mischief. He dared not hinder Sir Percivale, he dared not let him go. He stammered for excuse.

"Sir, I would full fain ride with you where you would have me; but, an my lord your brother take me, he will slay me."

Percivale nodded curtly. "As for that, care not," he said, "for I shall be your warrant."

Like a doomed man Brose went, daring not to speak one



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word of all that ached in his heart. As Percivale bade, he brought him his brother's harness and armed him, and brought him his brother's horse, with muffled hoofs, to the gate. On high, as for protest, the dumb beast neighed to the echoing court. Yet sleep held.

So was Aglovale forsaken.

## CHAPTER X

**D**AY came and day wore over Percivale and Brose, and still they came to no remedy of speech. Percivale pursued the south road according to the afore-made order of their circuit through Galis. He made no haste and no delay ; he did not neglect his bounden Quest. After noon, as my Master tells, he came to a bridge of stone, where he found a good knight, Sir Persides, fast chained to a pillar by the malice of a lewd lady ; and knightly he freed him and his servants, and went on with him to his castle. Brose maddened at the sight of him, as there in noble courtesy he sat out the feast. For his part he drank hard out of pure misery, fell to quarrels and brawls and insolence, and so came to hard stone lodging for the night on Sir Percivale's request.

Sobered and sorry, on the morn he came to himself. Cold and stern Sir Percivale scanned him and ordered him ; and he did not dare to be free with the question that lay on his anxious heart. Sir Aglovale's horse, with quick jutting ears and large attentive eyes, snuffing unsatisfied, did better in his dumb language. Sir Percivale mounted ; Sir Persides mounted also, and Brose saw that he made to go by the north road. Alas, alas ! Sir Percivale was set otherwise. He said farewell ; he gave a charge.

"Tell the King," said he, "how you met with me ; and tell my brother Sir Aglovale how I rescued you ; and bid him not to seek after me, for I am in the Quest to seek Sir Launcelot du Lake. And though he seek me he shall not find me. And tell him I will never see him nor the court till I have found Sir Launcelot."



Brose heard it, and he could not speak. The steady, deliberate tones fell to his ear like sods on a coffin.

Percivale spoke again. He, hitherto so meek, cast scorn for scorn as he charged Sir Persides with words to Sir Mordred and Sir Kay.

“Tell them that I trust to God to be of as great worthiness as either of them. For tell them I shall never forget their mocks and scorns. And tell them I will never see that court till men shall speak more worship of me than ever men did of any of them both.”

Then they departed this way and that. The horse under Percivale tossed his crest and whinnied after his kind. Brose went after him a hang-dog figure, dismayed.

Never did Brose quite forgive Sir Percivale for that unhappy message. For miles he rode silent, chewing over the stuff of it, ready to hate Sir Percivale, who could ride on leisurely with his head straight and high, while along the north road went forth, haply to break upon Sir Aglovale that day, a message so cruelly poor, and cold, and forbidding.

Alas for Percivale! His heart was still stunned and amazed; he had not come to himself, and well he knew it. Yet the brother in him was quick and loyal enough to defend the face of Aglovale against the world. Not openly could he plead his great distress, entreat for a further relief of time between them, point to a patient hope, admonish to the Quest, and advise to a separate way. Haply so much might break upon Aglovale through such wording as was fit and fair to be delivered by the mouth of a stranger and for any to hear. And all the brother in him spoke out against Kay and Mordred; for now he knew how he had been mocked and disparaged by virtue of his blind love and worship of Aglovale; now he understood King Arthur's hinting that he should remove from Aglovale. Opened were his eyes, and here he went from Aglovale! For he was not himself; for he belied himself, and he knew it. Troubled, indignant, distracted, he launched high word to relieve his sore and ineffectual heart.

Percivale turned off the roadway up a fair green swell, and

drew rein beside a welling spring, and a knot of pine trees that stood about a shrine. There he went, and kneeled and prayed devoutly; there too went Brose, and kneeled behind and prayed some curses. And all silently they stood up both and turned to their beasts.

Then said Brose desperately, "Sir, give me leave to speak and be gone."

"If you cannot abide restraint, so be it," said Percivale, far out from his meaning.

"It is more than I can bear. Consider, sir, how I served your brother Sir Aglovale, long before you put out your child-hands and swore him love upon these very hilts you now hold."

Percivale stood and considered hard; then he answered with constraint.

"Brose, I was loth, on account of past service; but I cannot allow your presumption that therefore you may riot like a rascal knave in spite of my head."

Cried Brose with a great oath, "Is naught on your mind but a bit of drunken folly?" He stammered passionately, "And think you your mighty rigour and displeasure stick in my guts? My lord Sir Aglovale, in old days, would put me to cool in the moat for no more, but he would not glower on me the morn after."

"If you be not again drunk, Brose, consider how he would deal, put case you answered him as now you answer me. Have you forgot his lesson writ upon that scarred cheek of yours?"

Brose put up his hand, and gasped painfully. Percivale, not from unkindness, turned away, and stooped over the spring. He washed the dust from his eyes, and sat waiting patiently. Brose marked on him then the wear of a sleepless night.

"Be so good as to pass over what I have mis-said, for pity, sir, and as I will not to offend."

"I will well."

"Sir, can I speak except you question?" said Brose, faltering.

"I have naught to ask."

"Then what is your need of me?"

"I need you not."

"In the name of God, then, why did you bid me leave my master to ride with you?"

"For cause—you came. Let be on that matter—we had one mind—it was expedient."

"Now I swear we had not! Why, why? No, I cannot hold my peace. Oh, sir, tell me in plain words."

"As you said, lest he should slay you."

His face was colourless and hard as marble; his wide, steady eyes stared down the man.

"I go back!" sprang sharp from Brose.

"Why did you come?"

Brose gave no answer, but after a silence he said, "So this damned tongue did set you on?"

Percivale bowed his head, loth to admit understanding with the man.

"Yet you would take me out of my lord's hands?"

"I would keep my brother's hands from off you."

"Why? I betrayed—I wanted his hate—that I might hate him as I wanted. Now I want no keep from his hate."

"Why did you come?"

"Sir, to give you such knowledge as you should be fain to have of my lord's past doings."

Cried Percivale, "Dare you to think I would against my brother question his servant?"

"Hear me you shall! For I would stake my life my lord Sir Aglovale has not told all the truth."

"This to me! Of him! Tempt me further, and by my head I will have you bite out that accursed tongue with your own teeth before you shall go hence alive."

Brose flushed darkly; it tried him hard to stand tame to such threatening. He clenched his hands, he ground his heels into the turf, he swallowed. And he kept his tongue to good effect. When he spoke at last, Percivale was aware that the man he had put down had risen to a higher level of address.

"Doomsday telling, Sir Percivale, may rub you more than



mine now," said Brose. "Let be reckoning by brother and master—a human soul concerns us—one in mortal pains—stressed cruel hard—by my means—and by yours. Respect of person is out of sight; he has me by the heart—as I doubt he has not you."

Percivale gave no word nor sign, and Brose went on, "Once we were chained at one oar, he and I, equals in misery; yet I gave him worship then, for he never made any moan. He asked for no pity, and he gave none. He refused ransoming, and his name; and, as I know, he refused lest his house should suffer scorn through his name. Did he for himself say that? I warrant you have heard plenty that was criminal and shameful to his account, and nothing more. Not from him would you hear the best of him: of his bearing, his daring, the wits, the heart, the hand that engaged against great odds and delivered us all. I say he has not told you all the truth—not the half you ought to hear. And I can tell it—I, and none other so well. And I will. Once he said, 'Speak, Brose!' You heard him say it; and speak I will."

Said Percivale, still with a rigid countenance, "I will be plain with you, Brose, as man to man. I have tasted knowledge that is very bitter, and all distempered I know not how to sain me; I pray God to show. Your help I cannot use; I know you a liar."

"How have I lied?" stammered Brose.

"You slandered Sir Durnor to me. For Sir Aglovale's sake you did it. How can I take your word!"

Brose was confounded; he could offer no excuse that would not tell against him in the ears of Sir Percivale, who with his sincerity and virtue had the hard uncompromising judgment of youth, and from his high standing condemned, with no indulgence to the weakness and errors of human nature ensnared through good affections. Here was he rigid, resolving to be just and patient, condescending to hear the man out in tolerant silence, all unconscious that the heart of tolerance was not in him. Brose quite hated him at that moment. He felt the wrong that the wicked endure of the righteous, and could

not utter it. Impotent, despairing, he launched out into reckless defiance.

"Fain as you are, Sir Percivale, to be rid of me, I warrant I am more fain to avoid you; for I do not quite love you, Sir Percivale. Cursed be the day when my lord took you in his hands to make a man of you. In my heart I deemed you not worth the pains he took; and so you prove. May God and the saints have joy of you! who mount clean to your place of worship, and would kick down him who shouldered you up fairly, because once he trod muck to the neck, and to you stinks of it yet."

Sir Percivale stiffened to hear; and, unchecked, Brose took no keep, crowded on his offence, said his worst with all his voice till he was hoarse. When his words gave out at last, Percivale stood up, spoke, and with one sentence Brose was daunted and beaten.

"I do thank you, Brose, with all my heart," he said. His face was set hard, but his voice was quite broken.

"Verily you are his brother!" said Brose, low; and again, when Percivale was mounted, he held on to the stirrup, looked up into his face, and said with strong entreaty, "Oh, sir, you are his brother!"

Though he got no answer, suspense swelled into hope, for following he was not bidden away, as Percivale rode at a soft pace down the slope, and at the roadway halted. Brose behind him quivered expectant. Alas! he crossed himself and turned away south.

Brose yelled a curse, headed north, and parted at a great gallop. But, as one backward glance he gave, he saw Sir Percivale swing forward and drop to earth like a log. And so he could not go; and the woman in man tricked him of his anger as he moved the helpless weight, and looked upon the pale visage smooth and fair. Sir Percivale was scarcely more than a boy in years, and his trouble was of a measure beyond common ado.

He came to himself, and found the man beside him, careful, dutiful, silent.

"As God knows," he said, "I do need you, Brose. Abide with me, and hate me as well as you will. I will take keep of you ungrudging."

"Sir," muttered Brose, confounded, "there is one I hate more than you, and he may well abide with you."



## CHAPTER XI

**T**HE waking of Aglovale was to such quietude of spirit as befalls in the interval between the rack and the scaffold.

To God he rendered thanks that his trial was past, and passive he leaned his heart to the coming pain of meeting his brother under the light of day. The arms of Percivale played upon him gleams from the well-risen sun, and though the place beside him was void and cold he took no dread. And though Brose came not at call he took no dread. All unprepared he went along and entered his own vacant chamber, taking no dread.

Lo! a blank. Sword and harness gone. He was forsaken. Percivale despised him and forsook him.

An hour later Aglovale crept away feebly, and hugging from wall to wall came to the place where Gilleis had died. And while the sun went round he kneeled in a ghostly presence, her gentle head turned away to eternal silence from his great villainy; yet he cried to God that his punishment was more than he could bear.

Retainers, who had spied and listened in vain, forced the door and found him tranced and rigid. They fetched to him one reputed a holy man and a good leach, who exorcised and bled him, and brought him to his senses; and then he warned him that he lived in deadly sin to come to such a pass, and warned him against meat and wine, and namely warned him against hardness of heart. Then he departed.

Aglovale had the arms of Percivale brought to him there. Once again alone to the ghostly presence of Gilleis, he took

his brother's sword, set the pommel between his feet, and felt the point with his hands. Cried a voice that was his own, "Ah, low cheat, low cheat!" and he dropped the point hastily and lifted up the cross of the hilts. Then bewildered, he was ware of another ghostly presence, the boy Bennet with his wounded arm and bruised fingers. "Be content, Bennet; for your sake Brose has wrung me hard and left me now." That presence faded out. "Oh, Durnor, would to God I had loved you more while you were man alive. Now would I walk the world barefoot but once to hold the living hand that now is dust." That channel for tears refilled and flushed his cloudy brain.

He looked forth upon the hollow sky, the rim of the world, closed behind the pair who had forsaken kindness. He went forth, taking to him without speculation the harness, the sword and the horse Favel that Percivale had left for a pledge; and he wandered he cared not where, forsaking faith, honour, and the Quest of Launcelot.

After many days he came by chance to a market-cross that he remembered, and envisaged his old self, who there had stood shamed in vain expiation; and he wondered how he could have found penance so unspeakably bitter while his brother Durnor and his man Brose held to him with love and devotion unstinted. Thence from cross to cross he carried his broken heart, summing up despair along the way to Camelot.

He was seen and known one hazy morn, hovering solitary in a certain meadow beside Camelot; and Arthur, hearing of him, sent Sir Kay instantly to summon him. Then he required of him tidings of Sir Launcelot.

"Alas! sir, I have found none."

"How now, Sir Aglovale, since you bring no tidings, why come you here again?"

At that Aglovale stood speechless; and when the King asked further: had he forsaken his Quest faithless and fore sworn? he smote down his head without excuse.

There looked the indignant Queen, and there Sir Mordred smiled despiteful, while Arthur spoke in cold anger.

"You, Sir Aglovale, who owe more to Sir Launcelot than does any man, give account of why you stand here without him, or any tidings of him."

Aglovale looked up and down. Came a sense of nakedness as cover of sounds drifted off; for the face of Arthur made silence. The tread of a knight entering struck hard at his back. One came and saluted the King in the name of Sir Percivale. Aglovale turned agape.

Said Arthur, "In good time, Sir Persides, come you to speak of Sir Percivale, for he beside you is his brother, Sir Aglovale."

"Sooth in good time," said Persides; "for Sir Percivale has charged me with a message that is mainly to Sir Aglovale."

He told all how Percivale had loosed him from the chain, and delivered his servants, and reproved the lewd lady. Then he gave out that unhappy message.

"Sir Percivale bids you not to seek after him, for he is in the Quest to seek Sir Launcelot. Though you seek him, he says, you shall not find him, and he will never see you nor the court till he has found Sir Launcelot."

So came the message home to him who, despairing, had forsaken faith, honour, and the Quest of Launcelot; and those that listened considered it fit and fair enough, and approved Sir Percivale.

"Well, well," said Arthur.

Aglovale lifted up his hands and turned about once, as a man that is hanged lifts his hands and turns on the cord. He cried against his brother: "He departed from me unkindly."

The hardest man there present was a little moved for the sound of the words. The first to speak was Sir Persides, scarcely understanding what he witnessed.

"Sir, on my life he shall prove a noble knight as any now living," he said. "And ye, Sir Kay and Sir Mordred, my fair lords both," he said, "Sir Percivale greets you well both, and sends you word by me that he trusts to God or ever he come to the court again to be of as great nobleness as

ever were you both, and more men to speak of his nobleness than ever they did you."

"It may well be," answered Kay, bluntly, "but at that time he was made knight he was full unlikely to prove a good knight."

Then said Arthur, wording slow, "As for that he must needs prove a good knight, for his father and his brethren," said Arthur, "were noble knights," said Arthur.

Without anger, without compassion, he spoke, eyeing Sir Aglovale as though he were not there. One word more he gave, when Queen Guenever leaned across and spoke low at his ear.

"Sir Aglovale is dead—dead," said Arthur, heavily. "Well, well, I say he is dead to knighthood."

So came to an end Aglovale's vain hope of redeeming his name knightly. By the way he came he departed from Camelot hastily, and went to the cover of living death.

Meanwhile, through the longest days that ever he breathed, Brose followed Sir Percivale on the Quest of Launcelot. Hither and thither, forsaking all forecast order, they wandered as do the winds. "As God shall lead," said Percivale.

Day after day Brose would say his best to show forth his master as he knew and loved him; he would urge excuses for him even at his worst; he would give many particulars, garbling as he thought fit; he would add lamentable intercession. And he would swallow back curses, and keep down the passion and complaint kicking at his throat, as day after day Sir Percivale suffered him patiently, and spoke gently again, and gave him never one warm word from the heart. Night after night, when Brose snored at his feet, Percivale would rise shuddering, and go apart to pray clear of the man, whose rude touch tried him almost beyond endurance, who could offer no truth from his full heart that was not coloured by his own coarse nature and dark conscience.

"As God shall lead," said Percivale; and it came to pass that one day Brose said, "Look you, sir, where God has led you."

Percivale looked about him and knew the place. They were come to the Forest Cross-roads. The elder-blossom was brown and shed, but the scent of it came back to him; he saw moonlight then at noon; he heard the squeak of night in the piping of day; all the sunny place was steeped with the dark of sorrow.

Suddenly Percivale came to himself. Brose beheld him with gloomy satisfaction as tears rained down his face. No pleadings of his had ever moved him to a tear, but now it was good to see how he wept. On Brose, too, the night came back strong with remorse for the wicked mischief he had done. He held quiet awhile, watching Sir Percivale and cursing himself. At last he came close and said, "Sir, you need me no longer."

"Leave me. Go!" said Sir Percivale, astray.

Brose wheeled and faced him. "I mean going; for I see that you need me no longer now," he said, his hard eyes fixed against the tear-stained visage.

"Ah, friend!" cried Percivale, understanding him then.

The man's face stiffened. "God knows I have done my best. Sir, I have told you only truth."

"Friend," said Sir Percivale again, "that I do believe," and he offered his hand.

Brose backed. "If I be dead, remember me some day to my lord Sir Aglovale; say how it was at your bidding I left him, and but to serve him; say how I have served you for his sake. For I dread to be slain at sight, and I would he should know."

"Bear with me, Brose, and abide. I would keep you according to my word."

"Sir, I go to seek my master. Take or leave me as you will."

Said Percivale, his voice broken with grief, "Would to God I were fit and free."

"Look you, sir, and consider this place well. I, too, was here that night, when you lay there, and there Sir Aglovale stood. The Devil was at me then to come out and tell you,



there before his face, what he was looking upon there in the white night. I tell you now. In this very place he saw one come driving his prisoners; he saw one bound, wounded, carried away to a miserable end; he saw one turn from rescue and go to ruin the only hope of his fellow who trusted him. Look you, that was shameful, pitiful, villainous! It was!"

Percivale, with wide, tranced eyes, was watching the face of Brose as he spoke; like a child he was giving himself to hear and understand.

"He saw that looking back: the shame, the pity, the villainy of it, looking back. You and I have not so far to look back to see such a sight.

"Lo!" cried Brose, lifting hands and voice. "Lo! my master and your brother bound for misery. Lo! I his servant, that drove and struck him. Lo! you his brother, his hope, that forsook his rescue. Face of God, these go for to outdo those!"

He spoke in vain. Percivale, indeed, rocked and bowed before the rude force of the man, but in the end he lifted his head and returned answer.

"By the face of God, I know I am not fit nor free."

In chagrin and disgust Brose turned his horse, and without another word passed away, never looking back. Percivale neither stirred nor spoke, watching him out of hearing and sight. So they ended.

Alone in the brimming woodland, Percivale lighted down, and kneeling at his brother's station, wept like a lost child. "Ah, God, be Thou my light that I may go right."

Years before, to Nacien, Percivale in boyhood had told his pitiful doubt of heart. "I would eschew both love and fear," said the boy. "I have no guide . . ." The good man had given him counsel of perfection—beyond him then, beyond him still. He came to better understanding in the Quest of the Grail, with Galahad and Bors, and with Saint his sister, best of all to teach him charity.

"The Devil," said Saint, "seeing you win charity, does assail your faith." And Percivale remembered how it was so when,

after fifteen days of torpor, his heart woke again in the forest haunt to love for his brother, when almost it seemed right to him to go wrong, to forsake faith, honour, and the Quest of Launcelot, and turn again to Aglovale.

He told her all thus far ; and she, regarding him with clear eyes, knew him by heart : his deep contrition, his perfect surrender of self-will, his pure worship foregoing the subtle temptation to assume as a prime duty the righting of his own error, his constancy and truth that kept him from the deceit of arrogance in the guise of humility. For he and she were fast united in the rare and wonderful love and understanding of a pigeon pair.

Brother and sister bowed close as Percivale spoke low for the telling of a great mystery : how first he saw the Holy Grail, and knew not what he saw.

He told how right so at the Forest Cross-roads Sir Ector came upon him, and from that noon to sundown fought him deadly hard. And when both were sore wounded past earthly remedy, lo ! traversing that haunt of woe, a shining and a breath of sweetness passed ; and whole without a scar, he and his fellow stood up from the bloody dust in a world a-bloom.

"Sir Ector could not see ; and I, I know not what I saw. I was aware of a brightness moving : even against the sun it shone bright ; and against white bloom I was aware of a maiden in white moving : yea, for the elder-bloom was fresh renewed ! And her I thought to be that dumb maid who was dead ; and then again, I thought,—O sister Saint, I thought her you !"

She began to tremble, and her eyes were tranced and light.

"Sister Saint," whispered Percivale, "was it you?"

"I know not, brother. It was not I in the body."

Aright she named day and hour, and told how at that time she was taken for dead by her sisters.

"Ah, Percivale, even to you I scarce know how to tell the mystery. I deemed that in the spirit I had seen the Holy Grail, that it slid and touched my breast between my hands. And with the double sense of a dream, meseemed that earthly

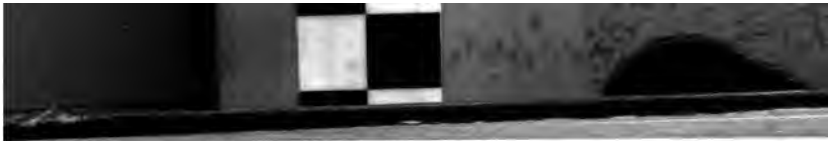
life was the dark womb wherein we grew together, and our quickening was upon us, you and me together, as it was at the beginning before we were born.

“And thenceforward,” said Saint, “come thoughts strange and simple like half-remembered dreams; and in the fear of God I speak, lest I do dishonour to a gift of prophecy. Then also I left worldly life and vanity; and I clipped off that my glory of hair, and wrought of it a girdle in prayer and vigil, with faith that to me was ordained some service when the Holy Quest should come to be fulfilled.”

That crowning grace of charity, lacking in Percivale, had ever shown excellent in Saint. In the end she gave away her life in pure charity.

“Madam, for God’s love pray for me!” was her meek call on the miserable creature for whose remedy she, the last of a hundred slaughtered virgins, offered a dishful of blood that drained away life from her generous heart.

So in the body she led Percivale no further in the Quest of the Grail.



## CHAPTER XII

**N**OW from straying, this tale turns back to go with Brose.

Casting to and fro through Galis, he came upon tidings of his master, and traced him towards Camelot, till meeting with Sir Persides he learned enough to turn him again distracted. To Nacien the Hermit he sought in vain, and to Sir Hermind, and, come to Cardiff, heard how the Queen was dead. He had wit to consider that if Sir Aglovale knew, her tomb would draw him; so he prayed Sir Hermind to have a watch set about the place against his coming secretly.

As Brose was passing the sacred walls where in the chancel the Queen was buried, pelting weather beat from the north-east, and the windows were ardent for Benediction, so that he was minded to enter. Against the north wall stood a leper in the wet, with bell and bowl and cloth, his covered face turned to the strait window that is called the leper's squint. Brose barely glanced on him as he went by; but when, having made an end of staring within and of his poor devotions, he departed, the leper he noticed again for pity. The man kneeled, ineffectually sheltered by the pent above; his frieze clothing hung on him drenched and heavy, his bowl on the rain-washed slabs beside him held a puddle of water. Brose cried "Ho!" twice, and the leper lifted his head and turned towards him the two great eyelet-holes of his headcloth.

"Poor devil!" said Brose, as from his distance he spun a silver piece that plashed to its mark in the bowl.

The leper neither took up the alms nor blessed the giver,

but with monstrous eyes regarded him as he swung on his way.

From Cardiff, Brose turned west along the coast, for he deemed that Sir Aglovale might have taken to the seas as before. At Milford Haven he lighted on a false clue, so that he crossed the channel to Ireland, and after a bootless search returned disheartened to Cardigan at a snowy time.

It happened that as Brose came up to the bridge of Cardigan, which was narrow and a little steep, he heard the tinkling of a bell shrill in the frosty air, and saw a tall leper making up on the further side. "Now," said Brose to himself, churlish, "if he turn he may come on, but if he come on he shall turn." The bridge was of such a width that he was but just within his rights to enforce on the unclean his obligation to turn back before any he met in a strait way. To the crown of the bridge the leper came, and stood still as Brose neared. He did not shake his bell nor lift his cry, "Unclean!" and he did not turn, but made way quickly, pressing close against the coping.

"Way, there!" called Brose, setting to his curst game. "Way there, fitchew!" he repeated.

Up went his cudgel threatening, and as the leper only shrank flatter against the stones, he strode forward and dropped it smartly on his skull. His choler rose, so obstinately the man stood.

"I will learn you," he cried truculently, "to take heed of where you bring your filthy carcase!" and set to with tongue and arm; nor would he stay when the leper turned about without a word to plod back the way he came.

Heated into brutality, Brose drove him, with blows and abuse, clear off the bridge and into a roadside drift. He laughed when he looked back, so grotesque was the figure he left, up to the middle in snow, stockstill, with dark eyelet-holes watching him away.

From the castle of Cardigan, Brose took horse again, and turned into Northgalis. Sir Aglovale there was greatly hated, so that he had an evil time and perils for his sake. Passing

thence through the Waste Lands he came at last to that Priory where Bennet was buried. There he saw Favel, and the harness and sword of Sir Percivale, and was shocked to think that his master had left the world for a religious life. To this the Prior gave denial. Months ago, he said, Sir Aglovale had come and gone, he knew not why nor where. But he would answer no further, saying he must keep Sir Aglovale's counsel. Brose entreated and raged in vain; then in his violence he laid hold of the Prior, whereat the brethren ran and fell upon him together, and thrust him out of door.

He fell into sullen dejection when he had ridden off his rage. Suddenly, as a bolt from the clouds, enlightenment blazed. He remembered the leper of Cardiff, and the leper of Cardigan, and knew him.

"Oh, my God, my God!" jabbered the miserable man, and writhed and sweated as the dreadful truth in all its bearings took hold of him. He protested frantically against conviction: "But I drubbed him—but I drubbed him!" Yet memory testified against him that the leper went halt before him through the snow. "My lord, my lord!" howled Brose; and he beat on stocks and stones the headpiece that had served so ill, till confusion came, and crying out against an impostor, he laughed. Like a new shock came the rush of truth, and he went the round again.

It was impossible: it was certain. The injured master he sought after in mortal dread had let him pass without a sign; had taken the ignominy of blows rather than grant him one word.

"Do I deserve such dealing?" cried Brose. "Killing were more human and just. Oh, my lord, how had you the heart! Ah, your poor body! Ah, your poor servant!"

A year had yet to run before the fatal end. To retrieve his error Brose did all that man could do; he took no keep nor rest, and swore that he would not till he was dead or reconciled. Horrible was his task. Among the human dregs of vice and misery he sought his master, dreading to find him a leper in flesh as well as in clothing. In lazar-cotes and pales

he took lodging. Little fellowship had he but with lepers: creatures so wretched and degraded that they lied and cheated, and misguided for pure spite one who came among them whole, clean, uncovered.

Only once did Brose meet certain proof that tidings of his master were more than loose figments. He was sent to a tall leper who mimicked Sir Aglovale's gait and movements so closely that for a moment he was deceived. Shaking like one in an ague he stood forward, and hardly could he force a whisper, "My lord, is it you?" The answer came in the tones of Sir Aglovale, but the matter was leprous and abominable. Brose snatched away the headcloth, and saw a rotten mask with eyes fishy-blue. A ring of lepers made merry at this trick.

"Foul beast!" he yelled, and laid the cheat flatlings with a hearty cuff.

Quick as a cat the man sprang up and closed. The stink and the touch of him were too much for Brose; he wrestled free, turned tail and ran, the leper at his heels, and the rest behind, cheering in pursuit. He took to the water, swam the Severn, and so escaped from their pale. The merry lepers gathered on the brink, and watched the queasy man with antics and laughter.

When another winter was past, and elms were ruddy and quick, still at his search went Brose unflagging. Through pest-close, spital, and lazar-cote he had passed untainted for so long that he ceased to dread the risks he ran. Yet when one day his knees failed him suddenly, at that first warning of danger his heart also failed him suddenly, and he made sure he was stricken for death. He headed for the place where he would be buried, and rode as it were a race.

He was at the end of his powers when he knocked at the Priory gate. He asked for the Prior, and the good man came out austere to question him of his need.

"Of your charity give me a grave by my brother Bennet, and a word for me to my lord Sir Aglovale, if ever he come, and a truss of hay to die on."

Sense forsook Brose when he had said this, but on return he was aware of more kindness offered than he had presumed to ask. With his ill-behaviour to the Prior on his mind, he muttered, "Let be. I can die well enough without more help."

At this the Prior was amazed and grieved, holding him a miscreant rejecting ministration to his soul. Nevertheless he did not withdraw benevolence. In a little loft he had the sick man laid, bedded with a blanket of scarlet, a truss of sweet clover hay, and a pillow of hops; and he appointed one to tend him, and himself gathered simples and mixed drinks, for he was a good, hard Christian.

But of that fever Brose was not to die; and after eight weeks he was on a fair way to recover. A mere skeleton, weak as a babe he lay, renewing the use of sense before the powers of thought were able. Pleasant was the scent of pines, blowing through the open shutters, and the sound of April rains, and the sight of sky, tree, wooing pigeon. Once every day the good Prior climbed up by ladder and trap to fulfil his duty, and broke that pleasant dream of sweet spring with his admonitions and rebukes. Brose would sigh in relief when he ceased and went, feeling the gratitude he owed a weary load; while the Prior would sigh and pray for that poor soul, so wanting in all signs of grace.

Came the last day. Brose slept. In his dreams he heard, as often, the sound of uneven paces coming to his bed. "Ah, my lord," he muttered in his sleep. Who then fetched a painful breath? Brose started up awake. There in leper's habit, stood he motionless, monstrous-eyed, holding the tongue of his bell. Rigid with terror, Brose gazed a moment. Alas, alas! Guilty fear and shame were stronger than love; he cast up his hands, named him gasping, cowered back upon his pillow, and buried his face.

The thick drumming of his poor heart covered the sound of retreating feet; but he heard the fall of the trap. Too late he lifted up a feeble, frantic cry. Naked from the bed he started, fell down, crawled on his knees along the floor to the



trap. That he could not raise. "My lord, my lord!" he wailed, and beat above the exit with all the strength of his weak hands. None heard to answer. He held, listening. Only rain sounded on the roof. He beat and listened, and called and beat again.

There was a shuttered gap in the wall for storage to the loft, and presently through the chink came up the little waft of sound: the ringing of that leper's bell at a distance, coming near and nearer below. Brose staggered up to his feet, snatched back the hasp, and tugged desperately. The shutter swung slowly in. He stood on the sill. The green world rushed against him, silvered with slants of rain; quick and clear tinkled the bell, and there strode he the leper, already past.

"My lord Sir Aglovale!" with all his voice cried Brose.

He made no sign of hearing. With head bowed against the rain he went on at unaltered speed. "My lord, my lord!" He was past the reach of that broken wail. Brose flung up his arms in despair. Oh, cast body—cast soul!

Sir Aglovale was out of hearing then; but he saw a young server, scudding to shelter, halt and jerk up his hands. His heart caught dreadfully as he turned to look behind. There was cause. At the foot of the wall he had passed lay a heap that was human.

Aglovale lifted the poor naked body from the stones, knowing well enough that he was answerable. Though life was not out, hopeless injury was visible on the staring frame. Such skin and bone was light enough to bear, yet gentlest handling fetched moans of pain so grievous that Aglovale was constrained to lay his burden down on the nearest turf, where an elder-tree gave a little shelter from the fleet rain-shower. Hood and gown he stripped off, turned them, and spread them on the moist ground; he took off also the harsh hair that was his shirt. The young server looked on in trembling horror; then he came to his aid, and between them carefully they put the dying man to lie dry. The lad pulled off his gown too, and covered him, and hung up the cilice

against the weather ; while Aglovale sat himself down and raised his head upon his knee.

"Go in and bid here a priest in all haste to give houseling."

"Sir," stammered the lad, "oh, sir, I saw—I doubt if that may be."

"Begone and obey!" said Aglovale so fiercely that he went without more words.

Brose ceased from moans at the sound of his master's voice ; his eyelids moved a little ; there was a break of breath. Aglovale laid his hand over the heart and listened. Quietly it resumed, and Brose clasped both hands fast about his wrist and looked up for his face. He was quite satisfied. Once or twice a low grunt broke, compound of laugh and sob, wringing the hearer's heart.

Came a feeble whisper, "My dear lord, speak to your sorry servant."

Brokenly Aglovale answered, "Brose, my dear servant, your sorry master! Jesu Christ show mercy on us both."

"Lift me, my lord, that I may better see you."

Aglovale shifted him up a little, back against his knees. The death-dew stood thick on the man's brow, and the brow of his master was as wet with anguish.

Closely Brose scanned the face, blanched pallid as his own, and the unclothed body.

"Clean," he said, "quite clean."

He put out his hands, stroked and felt over the hard, lean flesh, sinewy arms, chest, ribs ; he touched upon the old wound, open. "Ah me, unhealed!" he muttered pitiful, eyeing the stain on his fingers.

"Friend, friend!" said Aglovale in his pains. "Dig in deeper and have out my heart at once, to know, as God does know, its grief. Oh, pardon, Brose! I knew not what I did."

"Nor did I." The first tears that Aglovale had ever seen stood in his hard eyes. "Nor did I. How I did drub you, not knowing! My lord, I got worse aches than I gave. Ah, but you were hard!"

The Prior, with the lad and others, was coming; as fast he came as he could walk with reverence for That he carried in his hands.

"Forgive me all, Brose, for the love and fear of Jesu God, and make you ready to receive your Saviour."

A spasm crossed the countenance of Brose; his jaw fell slack, his eyes dilated and rested upon his master in a sombre, inscrutable stare.

Aglovale called on high, "Haste, oh slugs, haste!" and turned again to wipe off sweat and tears. "Mercy! what pain!"

"No," whispered Brose. "So little now."

Then came the Prior, breathless, and beheld those two dreadful men, with naked bodies, holding each other, with faces drawn in anguish at gaze on each other. He put the pyx into other hands, and fell on his knees.

"Repent, wretched sinner! It is not too late, even now. The mercies of God are very wide. Confess and be sorry for your sins, and though the deadliest, even that may be forgiven you."

Brose never shifted his eyes. The film of death was in them, and over his face spread the subtle change that never lifts. Yet for some minutes he breathed gently: great minutes, full crammed by the Prior with pious entreaties, that the dying man heard as they were falling rain. His lips moved, and all hushed to hear.

"My lord, kiss of peace."

He smiled faintly as Aglovale leaned forward, breast to breast, and kissed him. His hands tightened their hold with an effort, then fell loose. His head dropped forward on his master's shoulder with a little chuckle of content. No beat nor breath could Aglovale feel stir in the ribs against him.

"God receive his soul to rest."

None said Amen. The Prior stood up trembling, and he and his company looked on each other with white, horrified faces; only the young server had dropped on his face and was sobbing. Aglovale rested as still as if he, too, were dead, and

for a while none had the heart to speak in the presence of such death and grief.

When at last the Prior came and touched him, he lifted up a ghastly visage. All in morne silence they watched him as, with the sign of the cross, he closed the lids of the dead man, and laid him down reverently, lifted up the jaw, straightened the limbs, lapped him decently. Last he crossed him brow and breast. Without dispute the Prior stood by, seeing his office done by another.

Then said Aglovale, "He shall be buried beside his brother."

"Alas! Sir Aglovale," quavered the Prior, "he may not be buried there. How came he by his death?"

Painfully Aglovale brought forth what he knew of the truth.

"I caused his death; I confess it. I left him in distress—he wanting comfort—without a word I went, for I am curst. And eager after me he leaned out from a window, calling—and fell. Ah, gape and wag your heads upon me, who have lost my best friend by unkindness."

"One who saw says he died otherwise; that he cast himself down wilful to death."

He cried out mightily in terror, "A lie, oh, a lie! Who has said it?"

Like frightened sheep they huddled from him, thrusting forward the witness to the Prior's hand.

"I said but what I saw," whimpered the lad. "It is God's truth I did see—I can say no otherwise. He laid his arms across his eyes—so! He stepped back—so! He pitched himself forward headlong, as would to Heaven I had never seen."

Aglovale turned and fell on his knees by the body to look in the dead face. "Brose, Brose!" he questioned huskily of eternal silence. Further he questioned, higher, "Oh, my God, my God, my God!" He surrendered question with a great cry of despair, and called on death and damnation.

To the Prior he came on his knees to beg passionately for Christian burial to Brose.

"May I be buried like a dog, but not he. For howsoever he died I was the cause. Show such kindness to his poor body, that God above may see to consider on kindness to his poor soul."

As he kneeled, holding the good man by the skirt, supplicating, trembling, tears sprang and ran down his haggard face, and his speech was hindered by sobs so fierce that on his naked body the ribs stood out straining, and the hurt in his side welled and trickled. So piteous was the spectacle that the Prior himself was in tears to refuse him. Yet, as was his duty, so he did; and since other consolation he would offer was rejected blasphemously, he and his company at last departed heavily, sodden to the heart, and left the wretched man shedding curses.

Presently two came again with mattocks and a piece of scarlet blanket for Brose in his last bed. These they left, for Sir Aglovale would not suffer them to deal with the body.

Within the chapel the Prior gathered his company, and all engaged in pitiful prayer. For the dead man they might not pray, but for the living they prayed right hard and constantly. Only the young server, wanting his gown, stole aloft before the day was done. Behind the shutter he laid himself down, and by the chink at the sill watched the burial of Brose.

The world was washed and radiant at the stoop of day, jubilant with singing birds, fragrant, delightful, topped by a rainbow-sweep wasting up into pure sky. The elder-tree glittered to wind and sun. At its roots, like a blot of blood, lay the scarlet roll.

Sir Aglovale dug the grave. Dark, dry blood crumbled from his side and fresh red ran, as he peeled off the emerald turf and trenched through damp soil and dry. With every heft came a little start of blood.

The body of Brose was already rigid as he re clothed it in scarlet and brought it to the brink of the grave. There it rested, while down in the pit stood Sir Aglovale, worked with sobs, pressing to the lifeless breast his face and hands.

Then the young server saw the shrouded clay entered to



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its final home ; but to the bed of the grave he could not spy. The sun sank and set, and the rose of eve mounted the sky and faded. " Ah, mercy ! " shivered the lad. " Will he never quit the pit ? Is he, too, dead ? "

The ringing of a bell summoned him away then ; but later he crept back, to see Sir Aglovale filling up the grave in the pearly twilight, treading down the mould, resetting the turf. The last he saw of that sorry burial was him prostrate on the unhallowed grave of his poor servant.

Yet Brose, who had little piety and much love, though no stake pinned him down, rested quietly thereafter as any of the blessed dead.

### CHAPTER XIII

**N**ACIEN the Hermit was stricken with age and feeble, yet he came down from the height of Wenlock Edge when a child brought in word of a miserable wight below. Where first he had met with Sir Aglovale he found him again, and knew him through his disguise when he spoke.

Sir Aglovale refused consolation. "He is dead. I have destroyed him. Body and soul I have destroyed him."

"God defend! My son, what have you done? Is he your brother, Sir Percivale?"

"Brose, who loved me. Brose. He is dead and buried like a dog. I destroyed him body and soul."

He would give no clearer answer, so Nacien forsook question and lifted supplication to Heaven for them both, living and dead. Aglovale stopped his ears, cursing; and he started away when the holy man made the sign of the cross; and like a demon put to flight he took his frantic course, that ended headlong well-nigh to his destruction.

Nacien took him in charge then, and by his skill and goodness preserved his life; and sense and strength came back to him, though so slowly, that near a month passed before he was fit to bear question.

"I have lost," said Aglovale. "Trouble me no further."

"What have you done? What of your brother, Sir Percivale?"

"He has done with me."

He told all, little by little; neither for relief nor counsel, but rather as a docile child because Nacien bade. With sorrow and deep compassion the saintly man heard that

grievous tale of affliction and loss ; yet, for all his godliness and wisdom, he could not find the remedy for that broken heart."

"Sir, cease your pains for me," said Aglovale, "they have no use."

"Take heed, my son, lest you fall to the deadliest of sins, that is despair. Thereby perished Brose."

"Sir," said Aglovale, quivering, "need you preach to me of his damnation who loved me?"

"In the name of God," said Nacien, "I do speak as there is need ; for too like his love for you has been yours for your brother—insubordinate. So has the countenance of the creature been worshipped and the countenance of the Creator despised."

"There is no need to tell me so. Cease and let me be."

He answered so not sullen, but weary and indifferent. And Nacien did not discover the ground of his condition, for searching question he met with silence ; and when encouragement was offered him with a measure of praise, came the same answer, "Cease, cease, there is no use."

So in patience and prayer the hermit refrained for a time, grieved and wondering that the bravest penitent that ever he guided should have so forsaken faith and hope.

Aglovale, as soon as he was able to go, asked for his leper's habit. Then Nacien called a child, and bade him go fetch what belonged to Sir Aglovale. An hour went before he came again.

With tramp of hoof and rattle of steel he came again ; and Aglovale, disturbed, saw the blond mane of Favel and the arms he had left at the Priory. These Nacien had sent for privily, and bestowed ready for him near at hand. He refused them, saying he had no will to resume knightly condition ; and still he refused when Nacien censured the leper's cover he had taken, and urged him to renew worthy living.

"I have tried and failed," he said.

Along the windy ridge came ladies on white palfreys, riding at a soft pace. With hoods and amices grey they seemed religious ; but when they lighted down, and one came forward



quick-step, her hood slipped back and discovered bright locks floating free, and beneath the fluttered grey shone rich vesture, fit for the daughter of a king. Then Nacien knew her and cried welcome.

Aglovale withdrew to roam the ridge apart. Her face was solemn and eager like his sister Saint; lovelier he had never beheld. Soon he was followed by two other ladies, who saluted him courteously, and he them.

"Sir," said one, "methinks your dress belies you; and we fain would think that yours be these arms we see here."

"Fair ladies, no. They are not mine."

"Tell us if you know whose they be."

"Those are the arms of Sir Percivale de Galis."

At that the two ladies looked one at the other and smiled.

"Fair sir, there you mistake; for we know well Sir Percivale, and have but lately departed from him; and this shield has a blazon like his, but with a difference?"

"Where have you met Sir Percivale? Where have you left him? O fair ladies, give me tidings, for I was once tutor to Sir Percivale, and loved him well."

"Sooth, sir, that is to your praise, for truly Sir Percivale is one that for knighthood has but few peers."

Straightway she told her tale: how on a morning as she was hawking by the water, two knights came riding and called to her from the further side; and she gave them to know that within the castle thereby they should find the mightiest man alive, who of late had overthrown five hundred knights; and therewith she pointed where a barge lay moored; and straight one of these knights entered with his horse, and crossed over to offer battle. And of the battle she told that she went to see: how for more than two hours two of the best knights in the world fought equal, till with broken harness and sore wounds they rested and enquired of each other their names and told them. He, the young knight that came, was Sir Percivale de Galis; and the other, known heretofore in the castle as the Chevalier Mal Fet, gave his true name: he was Sir Launcelot du Lake.<sup>4</sup>

Flushed and stammering like a drunkard, Aglovale gave thanks.

"It was his Quest; worshipfully has he achieved it. Two hours equal battle with Sir Launcelot is great worship. O happy ladies to have seen!"

"Sir, there is behind more to tell to the worship of Sir Percivale de Galis. Will you hear what high matter was told by that other knight, his fellow?"

"Yea, madam. Who was his fellow?"

"The noble knight, Sir Ector de Maris, brother to Sir Launcelot du Lake, he was his fellow. Hear in brief what he told.

"As he rode in a forest, a knight armed and ready stood in his way, even Sir Percivale. Howbeit they knew not each other for fellows of the Round Table, and both in the Quest of Sir Launcelot, for as noble knights they justed at sight. And Sir Percivale had a fall. Then he required Sir Ector to fight to an end on foot, and so they did. Fair and even they fought, for one was young, eager and strong, and one was sure, knowing, and practised. From noon to sundown they fought, till scarcely could they stand for loss of blood, as the wounds they gave were many and great. Never before had either been so hard matched, and so they fought to the death. And when they had no more strength to fight, and knew they were slain men, then they spoke together, and were known to each other with their names; and they made goodly sorrow together, and namely that they might not come by a priest to receive their Saviour at their ending. Then Sir Percivale kneeled down, and with great devotion commended them to Jesu-God.

"O fair sir! but he did not depart this life! Truly, sir, he is not dead, nor is Sir Ector. To the glory of our Maker and Saviour they have their living in this world.

"Then and there, whereas they looked to die, came and passed a moving mystery of light and sweetness; and thereupon they forsook pain and faintness and stood up whole of their bodies. And one of them had grace to see a maiden go past bearing a shining vessel; yea, Sir Percivale saw, as only

the pure in heart may see, the Holy Grail that is the vessel with the blessed Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Speechless was Aglovale. He kneeled down, and the two ladies looked on his face wondering; looked on each other; took hands together and went away very softly, leaving him entranced and unaware.

All manner of sweet influences found out Aglovale where he had lost himself. There was a little patch of dim blue, a weed embedded in thyme, that rooted to unfading remembrance. The benediction of the sun, the embrace of the wind, the inspirations of fresh may, were solvents to dividual sense; a fire, an air, an essence was he, above the poor particles that walked the ridge with him, halt, wasted, feeble.

At the close of day the voice of Nacien recalled him. "Give praise to God, my son."

Said Aglovale, "He has seen the Holy Grail. Percivale. Percivale has seen the Holy Grail."

The saying of it was sweet to him; he said it over and over; he asked to hear it by the mouth of Nacien, and listened agape a little, smiling, as a child listens to old rote.

Below went the three ladies, riding through thickets of may into the lowland mist. "O happy ladies! to have seen and heard. Sir, they vanished from me. What are they?"

Right so drew near a fresh visitant. With the child to guide, an old man in religious clothing came up from below; like one of the prophets, his face shone ruddy and glorious in the evening glow on the height. Nacien hailed him with joy, and then Sir Aglovale knew him for Sir Brastias, once a noble knight, who in old age had turned to holy living as a hermit.

"Sir," said the child to Aglovale, "the lady who spoke with you sends you word that to-morn she rides for the court of King Arthur; and she prays you to go with her for the high feast of Pentecost; and this is her token for your wear." And with that he handed branches of thorn, with blossom of red and of white.

Amazed at that gracious invitation from one who seemed to him like a heavenly agent, Aglovale took the blossoming

thorn, and pondered, and understood a fair significance. The two holy men passed him near, rapt in discourse on a high matter. They spoke of the Holy Grail, of the best knight of all the world, of the coming feast of Pentecost when he should be made known. A little way off upon the ridge the child began chanting his evening hymn. Facing the sunset sky, where a star glimmered, he stood ; and this he chanted :

“ Fairest Lord Jesu,  
Ruler of all nature,  
O Thou of God and man the son !  
Thee would I worship,  
Thee would I cherish,  
Thou my soul’s glory, joy, and crown.

“ Fair is the sunshine,  
Fairer still the moonlight,  
And all the twinkling starry host.  
Jesu shines fairer,  
Jesu shines clearer,  
Than all the lights that heaven can boast.”

Then Aglovale was left to twilight and solitude, mazing over the blossoming colours of Pentecost, swayed by the gusts of heaven.

The flowers were in his hands as late he entered from the night, and stood before Nacien, diffident, expectant, fain.

“ God has been gracious to you, my son,” said the hermit.

“ O sir, an so you hold, seeing I have served under God, and not in vain, consider me now and stint me not ! Give me to see according to your light, that I may worship more perfectly.”

“ In the name of God I charge you,” said Nacien. “ Renew your service ; renew your life. Go down hence and fill up the number of the Round Table. For I tell you that at this feast of Pentecost the highest worship shall befall the fellowship of the Round Table that ever man shall see.”

“ One has bidden me so already. And see ! here is token she has sent. Who is she ? What are they—those ladies ?”

“ It were well that you go with that courteous lady, for she

rides to forewarn King Arthur of this high matter. Also to warn Sir Launcelot that not he, but another, from that day shall take name as the best knight of the world."

Said Aglovale, aglow, "Oh, sir, name him here and now! the best knight of the world; him you foretold to me from the beginning. Satisfy me quite with his name."

Then Nacien discerned and ended his flight. "My son, his name would not satisfy you. Be content with less. I give you to know that the fairest lady of those three, she is mother to him that shall be the best knight of the world."

Aglovale fingered the thorn and plucked off a blossom.

"But go you down to Camelot to the feast; there may you see and be satisfied. For he that shall come shall do marvelously, and many marvels await and shall be achieved of him. And he shall never be overthrown; and he shall never fail; and he shall slay no man unhappily, for the will of God shall be with his sword; and he shall be of perfect faith; and he shall be a maiden clean of life and heart; and the virtue of his touch shall win back sight and health, and his presence shall give comfort to souls in pain."

Aglovale did not lift a look as the holy man spoke, absorbed in prophecy. He shed off blossom and leaf, broke up the bare thorn, and flung it to the hearth.

"I will not go!" said Aglovale, and turned out into the night.

So on the morrow that courteous lady waited and looked for Sir Aglovale in vain, and alone she came to Camelot. Also Sir Brastias made delay, and sought him in vain that day and the next; and so he came late to Camelot with his message on the day of Pentecost. Doubtless Sir Aglovale watched their goings, for on the day following the child saw him at dawn roaming the ridge, and took him tidings that brought him again to Nacien in grief and compunction.

Nacien to his deathbed had gathered up his feet, for the weight of years was too heavy for him to carry on. Yet, when Aglovale came in, he strengthened himself, and sat, and spoke with him for the last time, clear in thought and speech.

Earnestly he prayed and enjoined him to return to his right place, to live worthily and knightly. Aglovale answered heavily that he could not and would not; when he had tried his utmost all that he did went amiss.

"Lo! in Galis. There I failed utterly and was hated and opposed, till I found Sir Hermind to lend himself; and he straightway won all I strove for, lightly and peaceably, and was loved and approved. Now he rules indeed, and well, and happily, so I need to trouble Galis no more. And he sits now at the Table Round, and I am dismissed.

"Yea, sir, knighthood is dead in me. My lord King Arthur said it: He is dead. And it is true. Once I kept a dream of great wars coming, when King Arthur might remember me, how I served him well against Rome. Now I know that he would remember to forget me.

"All is lost. Percivale is lost to me. And Percivale has lost by me; but for me he had been innocent of blood. He fought for me guiltily, for I ween he doubted me then. He fought for me vindictive, for he loved me then. The fault was mine, that I left him in ignorance. Now he will smite no man to death for speaking ill of me. Him will I trouble no more.

"And Brose is dead."

Nacien questioned how, if he refused to serve his fellow-man in the world, did he purpose to serve God; and questioned whether he inclined to a religious life; and put him in mind how, long ago, he had asked his prayers that he should continue ever God's true servant; and, said Nacien, he had been constant so to pray for him since. And at last Aglovale was brought to answer him openly, and discover his perilous despair.

"Sir, I ask you to cease from any prayer for me as one God's servant; and for my soul pray not in this world or the next. I will not to be of the fellowship of the blessed souls, for those I have loved and worshipped have been so troubled and shamed by me in this world they would take little joy of my company in the next. Right gracious and kind would they be, but not verily glad. No, not the mother that bore me,

not the father that begot me ; and I will not to face them and bedim their worship. And bright Lamorak need never redden for me. And Percivale, here or there, need not nerve his heart to bear with me. And there is one who would turn away to hide from me ; she loved me, and died of the shame of it. Gilleis, Gilleis, namely I will to spare Gilleis."

Her name was a gaping wound as when Nacien first heard it when that grief was young.

The saintly old man, patient and compassionate, heard him through without showing how greatly he was shocked and grieved.

Then said he, " Know you not One Who loves you more than these, Who deserves more your love ? "

" Yea, yea, I know, " said Aglovale. " My brother Durnor would be glad of me. "

At that Nacien smiled and sighed, but let him carry on.

" Him I loved little, and regarded little while he was alive. Alas for Durnor ! he was so far my nearest brother in this life that I doubt whether I may not meet him where I shall go in the next. For he was an evil liver, profane, sacrilegious, and merry withall ; and he was cut off unprepared. Wherever he be, he will be glad of me, and will come brotherly, and hold my hand, and kiss my cheek, without constraint or grudge. Fain would I hold to him brotherly as he deserves. "

Said Nacien, " I tell you, you do presume most grossly, and your standing is rotten. God Who made your brothers alone can judge them ; and He sees not as man sees, for in His sight the first shall be last and the last first. "

Said Aglovale, flushed, " An you speak of Sir Lamorak, I tell you God Almighty has made few like him. He never did baseness ; no, nor thought it ; he was fair and strong and true and courteous from the heart outward ; and he was the most splendid fighter that ever drew sword. I deem Maker God is not as an earthly monarch, that He should let such an one go from His lists to be taken and entered to the boast of Hell power. "

Said Nacien, patiently, " I speak as to Sir Durnor, putting

case as to his appointed place, an his Maker regard him more favourably than you his brother."

Then Aglovale answered and said, "Yet there is Brose. Yea so! Mighty God has the heart to damn my poor servant Brose!"

Dread fell upon Nacien, for then he understood how despair was rooted; and he recalled how the wretched man had gone from him, frantic and headlong, almost to destruction, maybe to perish body and soul even as Brose. What help could avail in a case so desperate? what argument could a dying old man uphold whose faculties were yielding to the night? Nacien prayed inwardly awhile before he spoke.

"Have you forgot there is One Who calls you brother, Whose love is faster than the love of any you name, Who is more willing and faithful than ever was Brose?"

"Sir Tor!" said Aglovale, in a maze. "You mean my brother the bastard, Sir Tor!"

"No, blind man, not Sir Tor."

Then Aglovale blushed and smote down his head, and held quiet while Nacien taught and reminded him how Christ Jesu our Lord is the perfect Brother of poor man; Who was sorrowing after his love and worship, as he had sorrowed after Sir Percivale's or Sir Lamorak's; Whose offered love he neglected more flagrantly than he had neglected Sir Durnor's. Gently and simply, as though he were teaching a little child, Nacien spoke, and as Aglovale listened, Heaven rushed his heart.

"Ah, spare to rend me!" he said faintly. "It is not for me now to raise love and worship to God; yet against my will I do love and worship indeed, as never before with all my will I could. Howbeit my will is my own, and is bound down to my servant Brose. I am guilty of his end,—I curst and unkind. And he died contented in my arms. And to content him hereafter in our appointed place is but the due of his great devotion."

Now Nacien could not presume to speak any word of hope as to Brose, since his death was manifestly wilful and



impenitent ; but he spoke of the highest dues, and of the greatest devotion that ever was.

"Sure, He that made me will understand," answered Aglovale. "Ah, sure, a perfect Brother will know that in my heart I love and worship though I shall be outcast."

"Give me to know," said Nacien, "what you will do. Since you will serve neither God nor man, how do you purpose to spend and end your days ?"

"As to ending, I have lost all wilful purpose out of mind, and have come to love life in this fair and pleasant world ; and as to spending, I have no purpose. But before I go hence I do desire to look my fill on the works and ways of God Almighty, how He makes and mends in this world ; and I do desire to walk the earth alive with the sun and the rain and all that grows, and to see the eyes of kindly men ; and I do desire very greatly to hear and know of Sir Percivale, and how he achieves, before I have to go hence."

"Consider, my son," said Nacien, "that you are now but in the prime of your life, with all your faculties in hand, and with great capacity for evil or for good. Now, is it your will to give yourself up to serve the Devil as aforesaid ? How ? Do you need telling ?" said Nacien, and straight rehearsed the heads of old misdoing.

Aglovale considered the matter, and then he answered, "No. As for those sins, no. Now I find in my heart not lusting but loathing. I know not how, the Devil has lost that hold he had. Save for remembrance, I have come to be as clean in thought as in life ; night and day, asleep and awake ; and now no dreams trouble me. It is passing strange. I rest like the dead asleep, with never a dream."

"Would you to continue so to your life's end, it is not enough that you keep from evil and contemplate good alone ; except you do good with all your might, and fill out your life, the Devil will surely enter in disguise, and make you serve again to some dreadful end."

"God defend !"

"You still do pray ?"

"I do, that I may cause no harm, nor do it. For at least I may endeavour not to grieve and offend day by day Him I love and worship, though I be recusant."

"The least indeed! Would you be altogether barren of the fruits of love and worship? Rather with greater devotion and diligence should you quit yourself. Render the residue of your days to the honour and glory of God, to furthering Divine order in this world with observance and serviceableness and courage, or to enduring under adversity with patience and meekness and constancy.

"Lo! when our Lord suffered outrage on the cross, it was an offender there that friended Him with vinegar in His thirst. So you being such an offender, committing great outrage, yet assuage a little the dolorous drought of Him crucified. Dread not that He turn away His face and refuse the taste, though all you bring of love and worship be but as sour dregs, without virtue of faith. It may be that so you shall see His face and hear Him, better than some His far-off disciples."

Then Aglovale came and kneeled down and bowed his head to the bed at Nacien's knees, dumb with sorrow, love, and adoration. When he could speak, he said brokenly, "I promise you I will do what I can till God shall put me away out of this life."

Nacien in his heart then lifted the song of Simeon, so glad and hopeful was he; for now he was assured that the wayward man was off the brink of destruction after Brose, and bent upon a good life; and that might well bring him round even to the brink of salvation. To this effect had he wound about him and enticed him, when he saw he could not turn him direct from his hopeless doom, for he was both wily and mild, as the serpent and the dove.

But when Aglovale came to take thought he knew not which way to turn. Nacien was ready with counsel.

"Forsake your covering of death; do on your arms. Go hence this hour and fill up the number of your fellowship, and do your part in honour of this Holy Visitation now at hand."

"I—I," he stammered, "I cannot. It were a mockery and pretence for me to take part as others, knowing the Holy Blood has been shed for me in vain. And it is too late; though Favel should burst to carry me, time and space forbid, and the feast of Pentecost must pass me by."

"That is so. And you shall not see with your bodily eyes as your fellows shall see, nor be fed with sweetness as they shall taste, for you do not deserve; but you shall take up your part in bitter humiliation, and your portion shall be as dust to eat. So shall you prove your love and worship."

Aglovale rose and went out straightway, and came again armed. So weak was he yet in body and spirit that his harness rattled upon him as he stood. He owned to cowardice.

"There be two I doubt and dread like death—my brother Percivale and my lord Arthur. The face of King Arthur like a sword I do guess; Percivale's I cannot guess. Holy doom! how can I stand if he and he cast me down?"

"Now I warn you look for no help or comfort of mortal man. And if you be still set upon winning to yourself fame and favour by your deeds, then is your heart divided and your devotion without integrity. Bethink you, moreover, how, if you meet your desert, your battles shall ever prove you with loss."

"Alas! sir, how then shall my living profit?"

"The measure of battles is but according to the stand of the vanquished. Your battles may be profitable enough, though not to you; and should you be counted the worst member of your fellowship, your stay shall ground the degrees."

"Sir Nacien, is this soothsay upon me? Can you help me with no better hope?"

"My son," said Nacien, earnestly, "I have no better hope for you as you are."

Aglovale took thought and understood him. He smiled wryly as he answered back.

"Years ago one that would not consent to ransom his neck at the gallows-tree was set to slave in a galley, that the

gall of that life might enforce him to sue for relief at any price. I tell you it was all in vain."

Said Nacien, "Continue your parable to the end. What came of him?"

"Ah, Sir Nacien, but the end fits not here! For I broke loose and won free; and I loosed Brose too."

## CHAPTER XIV

**A**BOUT the time of evensong on the day of Pentecost, that lady of the thorn blossom, her errand done, rode her way to Nacien again to tell of the new-made knight Sir Galahad. She came upon a knight fallen flatlings beside his horse. That blond mane she had seen before, and those arms ; and when she uncovered the knight's face she knew him again. No hurt upon him could she find, and he was warm ; his eyes were shut, and his breathing slow as in sleep ; but rouse him she could not. So she waited beside him, marvelling over his state.

At length tears came from his shut eyes ; he sighed the name of Percivale ; he woke, and lifting got to his knees. Still he seemed entranced and unaware, as when she had left him upon Wenlock Edge ; and when she spoke to him by name, he turned a vacant stare and answered astray.

"Yea, I know it ; he has seen ! Percivale my brother has seen the Holy Grail !"

He missed the fragrance of wild thyme, and the little patch of dim blue, and came to himself, and knew where he was.

"Sir Aglovale, what evil has befallen you ?"

"Madam, no evil," he stammered.

"How came you here on the road to Camelot ? Few days ago, uncourteous knight, you refused to come at my request, when I sent you a right fair token."

He spoke still astray. "O happy lady ! speak again of my brother."

"O unhappy knight ! I speak you reproach, for cause that

you sit not at the Table Round on this day of days, when every siege should be filled, and the fellowship perfect. For the best knight of the world is made and known, and to-day he sits in the Siege Perilous that has never been filled; and Sir Percivale, your brother, sits beside him at his right hand."

She stopped, for she saw that his spirit was caught away, shadowed and enrapt.

"Christ keep us all," she whispered with crossings, in some misgiving as to his right wits. Then, with woman's sense, she began speaking soft and fair in praise of Sir Percivale until he heard.

"When young Sir Galahad broke spears," she said, "there were but two he did not overthrow: one was Sir Launcelot, and one was Sir Percivale.

"Now, sir, to tell you all fairly, your brother grieved greatly to hear of your condition; for, Sir Aglovale, I could not report well of you, as knightly or courteous of behaviour, when he questioned me hard. Also I would have you to know that I offered him hope, proved vain, alas! that with Sir Brastias you might follow soon; and then he was glad, and your brother Sir Tor also."

Not till she made to go did Sir Aglovale mend his behaviour, thanking her meekly and largely for her goodness to one, graceless and unhappy, who had rejected her goodwill without excuse. That courteous lady went to a thicket and plucked again blossoming thorn for him to wear, and lightly then she set on her way to Nacien the Hermit.

Early on the morrow, as Aglovale sighted the towers of Camelot, a hooded traveller came by, who halted amazed, and saluted him byname.

"In the name of God!" said Sir Brastias, "can you be here, Sir Aglovale?"

"Sir, no question, but here I am."

"Nay; but were you not at Camelot, at the supper, at the Holy Visitation?"

"Fair sir, let me hear whatever you know, if you be come from Camelot, for I was not so blest as to be there."

So Sir Brastias told him all that had befallen, as my most dear Master tells.

"Yet one says that he saw you there; and he is your brother, Sir Percivale."

Aglovale answered naught. His spirit was caught away, shadowed and enrapt, so that Sir Brastias marvelled to see him. Afterward he questioned his word more closely.

"On the faith of my body," said Sir Aglovale, low, "I was elsewhere."

"Hear now of the matter," said Sir Brastias, "and rede it how you may.

"So soon as I came to Camelot, and had said my errand from Nacien the Hermit, your brother Sir Percivale came to me troubled, and asked for you, why you hid from him. I told him what I knew of you; but that he had heard already from a lady. He said you were come to Camelot, for that he had seen you in your place at the board, the last to be there. When I said you were not come with me, he departed hastily on search.

"Then came others, Sir Tor and Sir Hermind, to question; howbeit they had not seen you in your place; and the point was in debate, whether or no your siege were void indeed throughout the supper. Sir Aglovale, I am loth to repeat all that touches you; all that I heard by Sir Percivale and others."

"All, sir, all. I do require it all."

"There was debate on a word King Arthur had spoken, when all sat at the board. In a manner he seemed to approve your absence. Sir, I am sorry to hurt your ears."

"Speak out, sir. I will hear all."

"Said King Arthur: that day his noble fellowship of knights was as complete as he would have it. Thereupon, your siege being then void as all could see, some undertalk ran as to whether the King spoke on oversight, or with purpose upon your absence. I do rather hold that he spoke but as to the filling of the Siege Perilous and the presence of Sir Galahad."

"Did my fellows so hold?"

"Alas! Sir Aglovale, many spoke of cause why he denied you."

"Did my brother, Sir Percivale, so hold?"

"Alas, alas!" said Brastias, "he too acknowledged there was cause, and he grieved greatly."

"It was within St. Stephen's Minster that I found Sir Percivale again: by his weeping I found him in the dark. I tell you it was pity to find him so whelmed, when others were all uplifted and rejoicing."

"Hear what your brother told! His day was turned to night in the King's hall for your sake, and the King's meats were soured, and choked him that he could not eat. So as he sat, on a sudden the thunder of miracle broke, the great hall shuddered and reeled like a barge at sea, the beam of the high Mystery shone over all. Men looked upon one another, but none could speak nor move. Then it was, in the great stillness that held before the Holy Grail entered, that Sir Percivale saw you in your place. Eye to eye, he said, he saw you there, regarding him earnestly without a sign. 'And then,' said he, 'all at once I was blinded with sharp tears, and I could not see. And then,' said he, 'I felt the presence of the Holy Grail, and I breathed that sweetness beyond compare; but I could not see, save a glimmer passing by, so blind was I with tears. Then rose my fellows, and I rose, and vowed my vow with them. And then remembering I turned to look, and lo! one had not risen, but leaned down prone to the board; and that was my brother, Sir Aglovale. But before I could make to him through the press, he avoided his place and privily was gone.'"

Here Sir Brastias paused, but Aglovale stood without a sign and did not speak.

"As for your fellows nearest you in place, none had seen you enter or depart; howbeit they doubted to say you were not there at all. But certainly none but Sir Percivale had seen you clearly in the visage, and none had exchanged with you word of salutation. In the name of God, Sir Aglovale, what is this mystery?"



He answered, low as before, with the same words, "On the faith of my body, I know not."

Furthermore Sir Brastias told him how Sir Percivale was in great tribulation and perplexity, and how in St. Stephen's he kneeled down and prayed on high. "Ah, Lord Jesus, take Thou my heart! Thou who hast called me to for sake my brother to follow Thee, be to him pitiful and kind, that he may know Thee sure above all brothers, forsaking never."

"Yea, amen," said Aglovale. "Enough for me only to see him in the body once again."

"As at this time, Sir Aglovale, I think you over late. At daybreak I set out when all was grey with the river mist; and as I climbed to higher air, I looked back, and saw the towers of Camelot afloat against the east; and there up the hill over against me rode as it were a morning star out of the mist. Methinks it was Sir Percivale, the first away on the Holy Quest."

Camelot was all at hush as Aglovale rode in. He came into the Minster of St. Stephen, and stood among his fellows. When he got his eyesight the first he saw was young Galahad. Without telling he knew him, by passionate envy he knew him, for there he saw praying a fairer soul than Percivale.

The King's stall was in gloom; for the lights were out that for many years had burned day and night upon the tomb of Lot of Orkney. Twelve tapers had Merlin set there, when he fashioned that tomb at Arthur's command: upheld by images of kings vanquished, they lighted up an image of King Arthur triumphant. So above the tomb of Lot his wordly power stood figured, whereas close beside had Merlin made ready another tomb, wherein Arthur himself should lie; and he foretold how these lights should fail before the coming of the adventures of the Holy Grail, as now had come to pass.

Presently, when the service was over, the King made all who had taken the Quest to be called and enrolled. First was the name of Sir Percivale set down, as already departed, foremost in devotion to his vow. Then one by one past the

King's stall went his knights, and the tale was made of one hundred nine and forty.

Said Arthur, "Who avouched Sir Percivale departed? Yonder I espy him kneeling. That is the crest of Galis under the colours of Pentecost."

Then rose the last and went forward with uneven tread; and the King's countenance changed as he saw this was Sir Aglovale, for plainly he was not glad to see him.

"How now, Sir Aglovale," he said very grave, "are you here indeed!"

"Yea, my lord, even I."

"Whence is this your coming?"

"Sir, from the dead again, to take up this Quest."

King Arthur paused and considered him hard. Truly never had he seen man alive carry more dead a visage.

"This is a high matter, Sir Aglovale, and I think you have no call to take it."

"Sir, I have vowed to God to take it, and here would record my vows."

"Your vows are too light to record. I know not how to countenance this, for your credit is gone."

Hereupon the King called up for counsel the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Launcelot, and put question: should Sir Aglovale be counted and enrolled with his fellows; he, a knight foresworn, who had wantonly and insolently abandoned his last quest, and had taken no pains since to cover his default as a knight should.

Beneath the eyes of Launcelot he reddened painfully and took his breath hard. King Arthur's strictures were not unduly harsh, he knew; in respect of Launcelot his default was so flagrant and particular, that well might he who had given him back his life begrudge the gift.

The Archbishop said aye. He cited, for instance, how our Lord at His supper, on the night He was betrayed, gave the blessed Bread and the Cup to all the twelve, not withholding from him who had a devil, and the price of betrayal in his hand.

Sir Launcelot said aye. There was no severity in his grave, considerate regard, there was no commiseration; there was in it some meaning strange and unresolved, that touched and went like a lost dream. In times to come that look was to meet Sir Aglovale again and again, giving him wonder anew till the day when Sir Launcelot let out of his heart three words to his amazement.

Launcelot spoke low. Many, he said, who went unquestioned, were not more worthy than Sir Aglovale to take part in this Quest; unrebuked of man indeed, but with the rebuke of God against them; and that should be proved, and name and fame come to poor account, as Brastias the Hermit had come to warn them.

"Alas! Sir Launcelot," said Arthur, "I would this Quest was undone. It is too great and high. And sooth not Sir Aglovale only would I keep from it, but the most of ye all, my noble knights, saving for your heavy vows.

"But for you, Sir Aglovale, how came you to these vows?"

"I—I vowed," he stammered. "Even as my fellows have vowed, so have I."

"Came you in at my doors like a thief and away? That has been said of you."

"No, on the faith of my body, no. I come straight from afar."

"Your brother, Sir Percivale, avouches that he saw you yesterday at the supper."

"Howbeit, my lord, I was elsewhere and far."

"Do you, then, presume to take these vows without occasion? You have not seen that your fellows saw." He pressed for an answer.

"Sir, I do believe that I also have seen a part of that my fellows saw."

"Say you so! When?"

"At that time the Holy Grail appeared unto you all."

"Your words match not one with another. What is the truth?"

Aglovale faltered and stammered. "I cannot tell—I have yet to learn."

"I charge you, on your allegiance, lay all before me without more question."

Already King Arthur suspected falseness, for Sir Aglovale had not answered him readily throughout; and now plainly he spoke with an effort.

"Sir, verily I know not what is the truth. Judge you. As I rode hither either I slept or swooned. The time was last sundown as I heard thunder. Clearly, as I see you now, meseemed I saw the face of my brother, Sir Percivale. He looked at me; he wept. Then against him dawned a light so great that his face faded as the moon fades at sunrise; and I dared not look; I knew, and I dared not look to see the Holy Grail. On this wise I vowed to God, to go and abide in the Quest, to see and to worship, and not to hide my eyes for any dread."

"This is strange telling," said the King, staggered. "What confirmation to this tale can you offer? I require all so much."

The hue of truth that rose at his doubt had to Arthur's eyes another reading.

"As to time and place," said Aglovale, "there was witness in the lady who returned from hence to Nacien the Hermit. She found me as I was; she heard me speak; she bound me to wear this token that now I carry."

"Well!" said Arthur. "Now answer further; has any man taken you report of the supper, and of the Holy Marvel, and namely of your brother Sir Percivale beholding you, as he thought?"

"Yea, Sir Brastias the Hermit met me this day and told me all."

"Did you offer him aught of the tale that you offer here?"

"Naught."

"And wherefore naught?"

The King's drift was clear enough: he held the truth to be no better than an impudent imposture to win place and credit.

"God's pity!" said Launcelot, low, and turned away from seeing a fellow-man writhe and choke past control.

"Wherefore naught?" said Arthur.

"My lord, he had no force to strip me to the soul!"

"I think you expose yourself."

"No, my lord! At your will and pleasure I expose naked truth—to shame."

"Well, well!" said Arthur.

Then he considered the matter awhile in silence; a great while it seemed to Sir Aglovale, who stood in suspense to hear if the King would tell him more plainly that he held him a liar.

But the King would not say so. He would not rule, he said, save in temporal matters; and since a churchman held Sir Aglovale entitled to be enrolled, he should not oppose.

Aglovale issued from St. Stephen's so blind and deaf, he was for passing his brother Sir Tor. And he would say little.

"Yea, Sir Tor, I go on this Quest. King Arthur flays me, and lets me go. Keep from me; for kindness only keep off."

He would not answer upon question of the supper and Percivale's word for him there; that dear and close communion of spirit, with the reflection of heavenly grace, the mystery King Arthur had desecrated and despised on suspicion, he would not again declare, even to his brother Tor.

Tor took counsel with Sir Hermind and Sir Griflet, who were friendly and sure.

"He is more obstinate in silence than ever before; but now he is not stark at all, but broken. Alas! I think him cowed. I know not how the King has dealt; he came away cowed to silence. Sirs, you who know him well, consider that!"

"Alas!" said Griflet, "once he was the bravest man that ever I saw fail; yet so curst!"

"Now I would he could show his curst temper. That is doubted quite. You never did know it as I, most hot and intolerable; it was but as a smoulder you both have known it."

Now it is out, as we may see by his face. For common kindness he thanked me, as it were with blessing. Of old he would offer me thanking as he would break my teeth."

Said Sir Hermind, "I knew his way with a difference; the same, contrary: round knocks bestowed as they were favours, good service repaid by hard usage; all, as it were, for gratification. I pretend no love to him, yet no man have I met whose approval I could more prize. In head and heart he was so just and hard. And, sirs, with all his tarnish he took no rust."

"Alas!" said Sir Tor, "he may come to rust, being broken as I deem."

So, at the departition of the followers of the Quest, these three good and gentle knights, out of kindness and compassion, drew to fellowship with Sir Aglovale, and held together as long as they might with faith to their vows

Truly as Sir Tor said, they found him broken; his curst temper was out of him; he was open to kindness. And presently the goodness of God Almighty, in the fair and pleasant world, in the sun and the rain and all that grows, in the eyes of kindly men, lifted his heart out of the dust, and he was meetly thankful for all these mercies. And before long he heard tidings of Sir Percivale.

Then he ordered his goings in such wise that Sir Tor took note and was troubled.

"Bethink you, brother, we are upon the Quest of the Grail, and nathless you do ensue after Sir Percivale."

"As for me," said Aglovale, "that is all one."

"Is this honest dealing?"

"Ah, Tor, as for you all, I have marvel however ye should abide with me, and be on the Holy Quest in singleness of heart."

Then Tor considered well, and spoke again strongly, and at last departed from his brother. Sir Hermind also scrupled and went.

But Sir Griflet troubled not; considering the way of kindness as good as any to go in, he continued with Sir Aglovale.

And together they rode four days without tidings, till hard by a Priory place they met with Sir Gawaine in his peaceable hour of afternoon.

A Queen recluse from her cell near by looked out upon them. Sir Gawaine at first mistook Sir Aglovale for his brother, till he answered for himself; and then Gawaine in a manner smoothly blamed his eyesight; for it was his custom to deliver his mind with a cover of courtesy to Sir Aglovale; not as Agravaire and Mordred, openly spiteful; not as Gaheris, who never spoke, and ignored him utterly. All this the recluse understood well enough as she watched. Sir Aglovale hove still and held quiet, while Gawaine and Griflet discoursed of tidings and adventure; for Gawaine had come lately from the Castle of Maidens, where he had followed up Sir Galahad; and he had slain those whom Galahad had overcome and left alive, as the grace of God was with his sword.

When Sir Gawaine had made an end of his tale and was departed, the recluse clapped and signed and brought those two to her sill. She offered tidings of Sir Percivale. Herself had seen at that place the best knight of the world encounter with Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale. Both he overthrew. With the spear he smote down Sir Launcelot, horse and man; with the sword, at one stroke, he smote Sir Percivale from the saddle. Then she looked upon Sir Aglovale, and chid him for his sombre cheer, saying that jealousy even on behalf of a brother was maugre and orgule and not a right spirit.

“Madam, who are you that know me?”

“Sooth, I should know you, for I am none other than your father’s sister, once Queen of the Waste Lands.”

With that she put back her hood a little, and he knew her and marvelled to see her so, remembering her radiant day, and haughty, untamable temper. But that was years ago, before the death of her only son Nanowne le Petit, that Nabon le Noire slew horribly, drawing him limb-meal out of despite to King Arthur.

She entered then upon good discourse, showing how she

had changed her life ; and she spoke of his mother's death, and of how his sister Saint had taken vows. But she would not at that hour tell him the way Sir Percivale had gone, for that way she knew had Gawaine gone also, in the track of Galahad. Then she commended them to the Priory adjoining for their lodging.

So she was in the daytime, changed and meek ; but in the night-time her old self fetched her up from her pallet, and drove her to and fro the narrow space like a caged creature, till she was spent and giddy.

"How long, O Lord, how long !" she cried, as she laid her chin against the sill, and stared at the misty lights of heaven.

Ghostly and large came a vision of King Pellinore before her, floated upon mist. Nay, but his son, Aglovale.

So strong and absolute had been the gust of illusion that still she thrilled and shuddered, and the force of sisterhood put away the votary from her. She fell to weeping, and cried to Sir Aglovale, why came he there ?

"Madam, I walk but according to custom, as I would better patience under the night of heaven."

She cried out against patience ; she cried for vengeance that was justice ; she poured out accusation and grief ; Pellinore dead, Lamorak dead, Durnor dead, all unavenged. She rehearsed iniquities that flourished ; the sins of Arthur, of his sister, of his sister's sons ; and the loyal service of Pellinore, repayed on him and his sons by abandonment, and murder condoned.

That truth was one-sided indeed, and monstrous, and distorted by her passion ; but it was main truth.

"Ah, madam, ah, madam !" cried Aglovale, and drew to her, pressing close to the grill.

She caught his hand through, and clung hard, and held it with her own against her heaving heart. The contact of warm human sympathy, whether for good or ill, was blinding sweet and dear ; they were at one, one mind, one blood. He heard her uttering her heart boldly before heaven ; lo ! she uttered all that in his own heart he had striven to stifle and still as the



mutter and argue of a constant demon ; bitterness, resentment, revolt, hatred, vengeance, freely and confidently she uttered ; and she justified all.

She left the dead and held to the living man. She addressed him without pity or excuse, from his own heart telling him to his own ears ; and even as he was, she cried out against Arthur, because this was King Pellinore's son, neglected, and abandoned alive to the despite of the sons of Lot.

"Madam, forbear, forbear !" cried Aglovale. "My father worshipped King Arthur, and my brothers dead worshipped him, and so do my brothers alive, and so do I, for he is my lord and king, who made me knight. And, madam, he has judged me for his worship with no injustice that he knows, but as he has seen me."

She cried, "But he has spared to judge his own blood ; he has shut his eyes, he has shut his ears, yea, even as he shuts his eyes and ears while Sir Launcelot beds with his Queen."

Aglovale pulled back his hand and stood away. Then she changed and spoke soft. She said she would turn to patience. Gawaine and his brethren had been patient ; ten years they awaited to avenge a fair stroke of battle by murder ; threefold had they avenged it, and overmore. And sooth, she said, Sir Aglovale showed he could be patient as they were ; she had seen him that day, face to face with the murderer of his father, meek as a maid and stomaching mock civility.

"Oh, ease your heart, madam !" said Aglovale, and cursed low on the name of Gawaine.

"Yea, I would do so," she said. "But come near !"

He came wondering, for there was a strange catch and fall in her voice. She spoke low.

She knew a tree, she said, that grew fair red fruit ; there over his head it spread boughs, though fruit was now green. She likened it to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Put case Sir Gawaine or his brothers tasted thereof, they should know sure enough that murder was not good, but evil ; sure as death they would know it. Her patience, and his, might well endure till the green were red.

"Then I will do my part," she said, "so you will but do yours."

"Madam, I would only do the part of a knight."

She laughed out lamentably. Would he so do? she said. Unhappily, before his father's death, he had agreed with Sir Gaheris to his shame; whence forward those four brethren openly refused to have knightly ado with him.

Said Aglovale, "Learn how one of these behaved him: my most enemy, Sir Gaheris. He trapped Sir Lamorak with Queen Morgause, and he slew his own mother there and then; but he let Sir Lamorak go at that time untouched, because he was unarmed and weaponless; with all his savagery he would not so basely destroy a knightly foe as he were vermin."

She told him that fair knighthood in him would not bring him to fair favour with King Arthur, for Gawaine and Gaheris were close to his heart to turn it against him. Much more she said to goad him on to her purpose; and still underhand practice he utterly condemned, and refused her. She sent him away deploring at last that King Pellinore's son was poor of heart, not fit and fain to avenge his blood.

So he went from her, not bettered in patience for that night walk. Gainsaying notwithstanding, he left her passing fain and fierce in his heart. And he left Sir Griflet, and rode solitary many a day in evil case, with little relief till he came to a white abbey, and there within to the tomb of Nacien the Hermit. There his heat was allayed, and died low with weeping.

In after days that Queen recluse set on another kinsman, Sir Pinel le Savage, to compass vengeance underhand. He whom I love so much has written that tale: how he purveyed empoisoned apples for Gawaine to eat; but another, a good knight of the Round Table, Sir Patrise of Ireland, took and ate first and died suddenly. Also how Queen Guenever was suspected and appealed of that treason, how Sir Launcelot fought and delivered her clear of the charge, and how in the end the truth was made known by the Lady of the Lake, Nimue.

But some years later the Queen of the Waste Lands was satisfied, and thanked God that she had lived to see the day of King Arthur's desolation, when all the sons of Lot were slain. And when Sir Bedevere carried the King wounded from the last battle, came she with the two wicked Queens who hated him—the Queen of North Galis, and his sister, Queen Morgan le Fay; and they three took keep of King Arthur to ensure that he should die and not live on by enchantment. Came Nimue from the Lake in vain, for she could not prevail to deliver him. So he died, and they buried him.



## CHAPTER XV

**N**OW comes the telling how Aglovale in the great Quest was near destroyed, and how he was tempted to vengeance.

He was come among fens east of the Waste Lands. A youth made up to him, and asked his aid for the love of God, and for his knightly vows ; and when Aglovale promised and went with him, lo ! naught higher was to do than to take up a poor woman, aged and blind, and carry her across a mile of quag.

“Well,” said Aglovale, grim, “I will do my best by you both,” and forthwith taught the youth thoroughly he should not to paltry ends so invoke God and his betters ; and then he took up the woman, she whimpering.

“There, peace !” panted the youth, sturdily ; and with a wry grin, “As I said, one way or another, my back could serve to get you home. So ’tis all one ; another way this ; but a shorter.”

“Good speed,” said Aglovale, “to a man worth the making,” and the youth stepped out before him at his tallest.

The quaking green let down the feet deep to the roots of the rushes. Then came exchanges of sodden turf and water, black and slimey. Over foul or firm the guide trod confidently his narrow way. Most times, he said, the path held good enough, save here and there ; but now a broken dyke above had let down an overcharge. He showed how the path was staked out at dangerous places, where underfoot, he said, sheaves of cut rushes were piled and matted against the sucking mud below, woven from side to side with growing reeds.

Beyond the quag, where the ground rose firmer, lay a fair sheet of water, closed by a screen of grey willow and poplar. At the tail stood a little mill. Here Aglovale put down his charge, who lowly commended him to Heaven for his reward. The youth, comely behaved, to set him on his way, went by him through the willows to the head of the water. On a raft was the miller, an old man stone deaf, spreading nets below the bank. There Aglovale dismissed him, and turned into a green ride.

A rude shrine hard by drew his heart, that was heavy then beyond custom. Upon crazy posts it was reared from flooding, and to keep back cattle a wattled fence enclosed it. The damp of the place had greened the Christ on the rood, the thatch above, and all the planks save patches where foot and knee had pressed. Aglovale stayed, and mournfully gazed on the image of his Lord. Cried his heart: Fairest Lord Christ, shall I never be called to any hard thing for the love of Thee!

Came a clank of steel. So loud rained the noise of poplar leaves, he doubted his ears; but soon he could espy under the boughs two knights at watch, who, upon his sighting, broke from cover and set forward against him with levelled spears. Hastily Aglovale made ready, and met the foremost so equally that both spears flew; and as the second came after, he avoided the spear, caught him by the helm as he passed, and pulled him from the saddle.

"Foul fighters," he cried, and trampled him down without scruple, till the first returned furiously to assail him. Soon the second, mounted again, joined. Aglovale cried shame; they answered never, but gave hard strokes; and like hunting wolves they kept to him as he spurred and wheeled in vain to take them apart. Up and down the battle drove till under the poplars by the water they pressed him close, and one caught his revenge, pulling him down from the saddle and trampling over him in turn.

He was hard to vanquish yet, and rose fighting to his feet.

"Light down, coward knights, or I hough your beasts."

Neither answered, nor called on him to yield. On foot

they came against him together, and gave him no rest. He was wounded and breathless, but fierce and ready still, when a cunning stroke sent his sword leaping in air. It lodged overhead in the boughs. Before he could plead, he was beaten down, stunned.

Spoke one to the other then, "He is not slain. Make we an end quickly."

From the prostrate man he pulled off the helm. "This is not Sir Percivale," he cried, "but black." He turned the face to view, and cursed. "This is Sir Aglovale."

Aglovale, coming to his senses, heard one say, "I began to doubt. His left-hand work was too strong to be Sir Percivale's." Then the other laughed, "Truly, I was never so loth to end an enemy. His living did all so blemish his house."

Up he started to his feet. "Now I know you. Murderers, felons! You are Lot's sons, Gaheris and Agravaine."

With his empty fists he struck frantically. Suddenly he gripped Agravaine, and staggered him backward some paces. Gaheris cried warning, and sprang to rescue, seeing that the desperate man made for the water, there to take one foe with him to death. His stroke was in vain: the struggling pair lost footing on the turf, and fell, locked together on the verge, in such peril that Gaheris put both hands to his brother. Aglovale caught him by the leg, and pulled him down also. Grovelling and sprawling one on another, they turned and heaved, and changed ground. Blows fell, dull blows. It was clownish work; and when it was over and Aglovale lay still, Gaheris himself misliked sight of the disfigurement he had done.

"Hold your hand, brother," said Agravaine. "By God! he shall drown. Give him that he chose with a stone at his neck to boot."

"Well, well," said Gaheris, "get him out of sight," and he turned his back.

They made too sure of their foe. As Agravaine hefted a stone, quick rose Aglovale and ran. Swift to the open ride he fled, and as swift pursued the murderers. Favel left grazing and came to him as with something of human understanding.

The saddle he gained, but no stirrup hold, when Gaheris slashed at the reins. Wounded in the neck, the poor beast reared, snorting, bolt upright, and Aglovale, flung to earth, heard his last hope thud away.

They bound him then; with his own girdles they bound down his arms, and haled him back for his sworn death. He did not ask a better, sure he might ask in vain. But passing again the shrine, he hung back.

"You murderers," he said, "as you be Christian men, grant me a little space here to take my leave of this world."

Lightly they showed how truly Christian men they were; for they led him and handed him up the crazy steps, and there they bowed themselves meetly in thanks to Heaven that no hurt was theirs from the battle.

Shocked with wonder and disgust, they knew that Aglovale was weeping. Leaning his battered head to rest on the wooden Christ, he wept, so heavily that he hardly could stay upright.

"This I cannot abide," muttered Gaheris, and claimed the pitious wretch for his end. On the image he saw as it were the wounded side bleeding afresh. He knew the same blood was on his gauntlet. Strangely that rubbed a conscience hard as stone.

Aglovale yielded like a sheep to their leading. Foul of face with bruises, blood, and weeping, as sorry a spectacle he gave his enemies as any they ever had put from the light of the sun. He spoke no more at all, either for curse or prayer, and he cast not any looks of fear or defiance. Only when he was brought to the water, one quick turn he made, and lifted his eyes on all creation round. Then his murderers thrust him down to his knees, and buckled a great stone fast about his neck by the slings of his shield. Half strangled he was as down to the water they launched him to death.

Gaheris and Agravaine stood to see the bubbles of life rise and break.

"Enough—come hence!" said Gaheris, and took his way hastily.

"Would to God," he cried, "we had done this business more cleanly."

Said Agravaine, "Like a wild beast he fought; like a very tame beast he died."

Lo! how the body of Aglovale had not reached its destined grave, nor his soul gone down to Hell!

Two scared watchers, perdue among the rushes, soon as the murderers withdrew, sped out their raft and slunk round to resume their nets, praying for a take great and marvellous. So as they prayed and drew, the drawlines strained tight, and the net stakes bent to a heavy weight, and back into light and air came the new sunk body huddled and limp. So quick was the work that one heard the murderers' voices as he cut away the stone; and full in sight they rode when a covered bale that was not corn swung aloft for storage in the mill.

Now, on stripping the body for life or death, the cilice upon it brought wonder.

"Mercy," shivered the youth, "is here that dreadful body again!" He bared the side, and beheld the wound fresh broken.

Said the deaf miller, "Now leave these dumps! He is yet alive; for see, blood creeps from his wounds."

The first of life that Aglovale knew again, was pain that greatly exceeded what he knew of dying. Sound was unfamiliar; it was the big droning of the wheel below. What human kindness tended him?

"Brose!" he said. Unfamiliar objects rocked his brain, and a figure that was not Brose. "Bennet!" he muttered. "Is it Bennet—here?"

"Sir, my name is Hew—he that you taught so hard to-day."

So he knew himself yet in the teeth of the old world.

Now, when Aglovale came to hear how he had been recovered from death by these two simple folk, and how they had watched all the villainous work, for false worldly pride he repented hard that any should have seen him weep like a woman in the face of death. Alas and fie! his deadly enemies



had it to tell among themselves, how, body and soul, one son of King Pellinore was so lost and overcome.

"Sir," entreated Hew, "be content to lie as you are. This is poor lodging, but safe when we take up the ladder. And for your horse, I have brought it again, and stowed it safe in a covert; so if those murderers re-pass they can know nothing."

Yes, he said further, he dreaded their return; for on the flats the water rose, so he knew the dyke had given once more, and by the way they had gone, must they come again.

Often he looked out, and with the last of the daylight saw, far off across the quag, the pair upon horses, white and black.

He told Sir Aglovale, quavering, "So as I said, they do come, but not as they went. Oh, sir, they come in peril of their lives, and know it not."

At that, Aglovale stood up and came to the window; and as he looked out into twilight grey, and saw how his two enemies stood in the treacherous place, for very hate and exultation his heart beat so thick that his knees failed under him and knocked the ground.

"Now the water stands higher than when we crossed," said Hew, low; "and night comes, and they have no guide."

"Think not to go," said Aglovale, and grasped him hard.

"I—I dare not," he faltered.

A tiny point of blue flame shone as the dusk deepened.

"Look, look! The demon is up for their guide."

In came the old miller. A lighted candle was in his hand, and he came solemn and set it in a socket over the sill, and, kneeling down, prayed aloud on the mercy of God for all poor sinners who went benighted by foul ways. Aglovale started up, and stood away. All the window frame and the shutters, he saw, were rudely blotted with black and white, meant to show the good and the wicked going to their end, and above was the Lamb Almighty. His prayer ended, the old man rose and went thence, indifferent.

Said Hew, "He knows not how fitly he prays. This is according to his custom and his vow. Once he was belated

with drink, and yonder demon with the light rose to have him body and soul. In mortal terror then he called on his Maker; and by chance one set a light here in this window, and so by that mark he bore and came alive. And thereafter he altered his life goodly; and thus nightly he lights and pays his devotions. God help us all," said Hew, "from so horrible a life's end."

"Deliver me from hearing such prayers!" said Aglovale, and cursed hard.

"God knows what cause you have so to speak," faltered the youth; "but for no cause will I hear. Were those the wickedest alive, I would I could help their poor bodies in so hideous a strait, for the love of God who died even for the sake of wicked souls."

Then he went. Aglovale staggered to the head of the ladder, softly closed and fastened the trap after him, and came again to the window.

The shades had quite lost him the sight of his enemies, and nothing showed on the blank expanse save the flicker of blue flame, now brisk and clear. Somewhere below he could hear the youth bawling to deaf ears; then outgoings; then a thin, high note that was ceaseless as the old woman wailed prayers.

In him was no grain of pity at all; but cruel hate burnt in him like lust, and he shivered and ached with the passion of it. Had father and brethren not died, himself had cause enough. Gaheris had counselled to hang him, had exacted a grievous penance in lieu. Agravaine had been forward above all, as he knew, with laugh and jest speaking to his discredit, that it might live and not diminish. And him that was a King's son they had pounded, and strangled, and drowned like a churl. And him they had seen weep before death. Why had he so wept?

On the sill, under his hands, all black were draughted the devils of the pit. Up the posts ranged black and white, the good and evil, on their ways to the white symbol overhead.

Came a sound out of the night, very faint from a distance.

It was the voice of his enemies' distress, a rapture to hear. He reached out, took the candle from its socket, threw it far, and laughed.

Crouched in the darkness, Aglovale groaned and weltered, and bit the wooden sill, as with all his will he tried to forget how he had cried: Ah! fair Lord Christ, shall I never be called to any hard thing for the love of Thee? To cover remembrance, he prayed on the names of father and brothers slain. By villainous murder had they died; their bodies were hacked and pierced on every side. He never had doubted who were the murderers; now, by the practice of these two upon himself, was their way known.

Now and again he heard calls lift, faint and afar. Once a horse squealed.

Lamorak! Lamorak! Durnor! Ah, heart of gold, Durnor!

Ah, fair Lord Christ, this is too hard for me!

Yet after no great while he stood up from his knees, and, pausing neither to look nor listen, hastily made for the ladder. Groping, he found sacking that he did on for clothing, for he was nearly naked. At the ladder's foot the shocked face of Hew fronted him.

"Haste!" he said, "follow me out with a light!" And quickly Hew, with a flaming pine, overtook him, breathless and amazed. He took the torch, and stepped down to the quag.

"Ah! sir, let be," cried Hew. "Are you possessed? One devil out there is enough."

He dared to cross his path and snatch at the light; failing, he held him with all his might. So weak was Aglovale he could not break away.

"Child, let go," he said. "Let see if I may yet save."

"In the name of God! Save! This cannot be!"

"In the name of God this may be."

Hew kneeled, and held him by the knees.

"Oh, Sir Aglovale, it is vain. You cannot. See how the water lies high. You will perish. Sir, you have escaped death that man did contrive; but yonder will a demon contrive your

death; yonder, dead men rise by night and seek for fellows. Not for all this world would I dare there by night-time."

But Aglovale only cried, "Off! off! In the name of God I go!" and left the youth sobbing and worshipping to the ground.

"To his murderers! What a deed. Oh, mighty goodness! Oh, mighty heart!"

Cried Agravaine in extremity, "A hand! Oh, brother, now or never reach to me. Quick, I am gone."

"Be strong and strive. Heaven grants us help. A light moves hither."

"A demon light. Trust not again."

"Keep heart; a good ruddy light."

"God help you, brother! I cannot last."

"We live or perish both," cried Gaheris, and quitted his floundering horse to make for Agravaine's voice. At every step the quagmire sucked on him harder. He touched a sunken pile.

"Give voice. I am near with good hold."

"Here. To the neck. Help, help! What draws at my feet! Gaheris—oh, brother, I perish."

Desperate, Gaheris loosed his stay and struggled out. He reached Agravaine's hand, but what force he took to draw him only served to sink himself the deeper.

So they were, helpless, as the light came near. They could see him that bore it cowed like a monk.

"Haste! For the love of God, help soon, or we are dead men."

How could one save, so weak and drained by the hurts they had given him.

"For the love of God essay," cried Gaheris, "as I shall warn you, to keep your life and ours."

So Aglovale felt for the stakes where Hew had showed them, fixed his pine to flare secure, pushed on to the deeper mire, and soon, by word from Gaheris, put hand on the sunken pile, having but to reach a man's length to meet the other's grasp. There one hand he bound fast to the wood, since

all he could lend was a body void of strength. He stretched himself out to the murderers of his house. Gaheris caught his fingers.

Void of strength, in spirit he was utterly ashamed, as overtaken in the practice of treason. With averted head he left the use of his members to them. Their great weight wrung him, his joints started, his wounds gaped and bled at the strain. Body and mind were in dolorous accord. From his hand to his neck they reached their way in turn; with dreadful embraces they reached their way.

Gaheris groped to unbind his left hand. "Mercy! the pains we have cost; this is out of joint. Now, God aid my poor skill," he said, and deliverly shot home the socket.

Firm standing they made together. No word did Aglovale speak, while the brothers gasped thankings and praise to God, to him, and to each other.

Said Gaheris distressed, "Credit me that I knew not how hard we used you. I am sorry beyond words. Give here your hand."

He had to get it by force. Gently he handled it and bound it well. He bound it with what he found in his hand—a length of stained linen. In wonder he scanned the man hard. No monk; his hood was the doubled corners of a sack, his clothing a beggarly tabard of sackcloth. He made no moan nor answer, and his visage he kept turned to the dark. How he did tremble!

Gaheris, with humid eyes and a troubled voice, complained. "At this expense," he said, "we two have our lives. Begrudge us not so much. God reward your good deed, and show us means to requite you as well."

He could get no answer.

Aglovale took up his torch, and, as the brothers prayed him, lighted them, while with much ado and some risk they went about and recovered their horses. With much ado and some risk then they toiled after him, on the most evil path ever they had traversed.

At the end where the ground rose, suddenly Aglovale

quenched the light and took himself away in the darkness. They called after him in vain. One with a boyish voice came in his stead.

"Who calls? Are you men alive?"

Where had gone their guide? they questioned fast.

"I will be your guide," said Hew, "as there is no other."

"What is this! Saw you no man go past? He that carried a light before us over the quag?"

"Over the quag! God forbid that I should see any such. Sirs, what tale is here? Those that go with lights upon the quag are none but demons and dead men."

"Oh me, brother!" said Agravaine. "I begin to doubt. He might not speak nor show his face; and now, I think, the shine of him was part redder than of torchlight."

Said Hew, "Then this is God's truth; he that you saw was none other than a murdered man."

"He was not dead," said Gaheris. "I held him with my arms, and felt him breathe hard. I held his hand, and set his bones. Bodies that rise from the dead cannot be subject to hurt and disjointing."

At that Hew without pretence was excited to weeping.

"What ails the little fool?"

"Ah sir, I am afraid. Here is a miracle of such a sort, I am afraid. Sir, I swear as all of this country-side will tell you, there is none among them who would go so far to help you as you say one has done."

"Sooth, and no reproach to them," said Agravaine.

While so they argued Aglovale had reached the ladder unseen, and mounted, weary, weak, and confused, to take refuge in quiet and darkness.

He came into light, and there faced him the old miller in a craze of anger.

"Whose dastard trick was this to make darkness? Was it yours?"

He nodded.

"Out, out you go! Ah, villain knight! This day, by the order of God's mercy, you escaped death marvellously,

and lo ! here is spite without mercy in return. Out you go ! Wag not at me your head and your hand so ! I pity you not, nor fear you. Able enough are you to go to and fro on your own foul mischief. I want no quittance more of you than that you quit this roof. Go gnash your teeth in darkness as the preachers bode. Ah, base knight ! those steel casings are the best part of such knighthood as yours. Out, out, I say. This place is mine, and I will have none of you, nor of your gear. There, helm of a damned head ! There, shield of a black heart !”

Shield, helm, harness of all pieces, he cast out of window as he railed ; and as Aglovale, defenceless, confounded, turned and went, railing he followed him, down to the outer door, and shut it upon him.

Sick and stunned, Aglovale crept away. Sound of distant going came faint, as Hew wiled the knights from his retreat. Then grew up the quiet of night, and all was hush. The willows scarcely stirred overhead as the unhappy outcast dragged on his painful way, he knew not where. Even the poplars were light at their whispers. Not a ripple lapped. Low down the moon shone, round and large, under a height of motionless cloud. This was the place of murder.

He began to rock and to mutter, “Ashamed, ashamed. I am utterly ashamed.”

The ways of nature and man he had abandoned, and done mercy outrageously. All the world might despise him. Alas, alas ! who did countenance him ? Nothing but abject shame answered from within.

He stumbled on a little way, finding his ground. “Here did Sir Gaheris smite me barefaced ;” and a little further, “Here did they both together beat me down unarmed ;” and still further, “Here did Sir Agravaine trample me.” From the poplar shadows he crept along to the open, now glistening misty-white, moon-struck, and dewy. “Here along they brought me again bound—me—weeping.” And no further. “O Lord Christ Jesu look upon me, as Thou knowest my cause for weeping !”

He was come to the poor shrine, and as he tried to mount, near swooning for pain and weakness, his footing slipped and he pitched to the ground below. There he lay weeping for anguish and despair. Yet Nacien had told him, Dread not that He should turn away and refuse.

"Ah, fair Lord Christ! show me Thy face, even me. It was a hard thing to do. It was hard. Dost Thou not know how hard, and how to serve Thee I did it? Lo, the blood of father and brothers called on me for vengeance. Didst not Thou, bleeding from the rood, bid me to mercy? Lord, look upon me. I am confounded with shame who meant to please Thee. So hard it was to do. Though I be of the lost, show once Thy face to my heart."

Weeping and supplicating, he leaned and kneeled from stair to stair, and came before the holy rood. All dark it hung in shade, denied to his eyes that were dazzled and blind with moonshine and wet.

"Rue on me, O blessed Lover of poor man! Rue on me—on me who do love!"

In his passion of despair and desire he started up; he touched the image with head and hand, stronger to importune than to stand.

"Dear God, approve me this once. Comfort me. My Lord, my God!"

Heaven descended as with miracle. In his hold the image moved; the outstretched arm of it parted from the cross, and from shade extended above him—the head of it inclined into light.

"My Lord, my God!" cried Aglovale, and swooned away for perfect bliss as his heart conceived the embrace of divine Love condescending to approve him.



## CHAPTER XVI

**W**HEN Aglovale came to himself he was resting in a world too bright and fair for him to remember. He knew not that where he fell there he still lay, nor that the night he woke from was some days long.

In mild lucent shade he lay, for the place was all tented in from eaves to wattling; soft he lay upon dried clover, with pillow of hops and covering of scarlet; like a child he lay, helpless and untroubled, content to perceive without understanding.

Overhead ran a rustle and patter of falling leaves, and light shadows went dancing down the slant of sun-soaked cover. The shadow of a bird perched sharp and small, and sharp and small to hear he trimmed his bill. Came a swell of wind, and burst open to him a vivid world, sun-struck and merry, with yellow leaves racing and spinning in gusts. Across the field moved a lady fair and slender, bending to cull simples as she went.

His eyes closed to rest, and opened to another day. He beheld the lady beside him, and she seemed to him like an habitant of a purer world than ours. Shadowless under the translucent cover she stood; blond hair set a lightness about her head; her quiet, serious eyes shed peace upon him; with the sign of the cross she gave salutation, naming him Knight Misericors. Then she took and served him with a fragrant bitter drink, strong of fennel. Purple flowers, the crocus of autumn, lay amid grey folds, dropping on his pillow as she gave him to drink. There was no recognition in her eyes,

yet faintly some memory of her stirred. He closed his eyes to better it, and sank again to profound sleep.

King Bagdemagus' daughter, looking upon that visage all bruised and disfigured, with the hawk likeness battered out, and pondering the achievement of signal goodness, knew not here Sir Aglovale de Galis, that worst friend of Sir Meliagraunce, her wild, unhappy brother, him she had almost hated in her gentle heart. So, her ministration accomplished, she blessed him to God as he slept, and traced the holy sign upon his scarred brow, and kissed him thereupon as simply and purely as may the blessed in fellowship. Then she departed to go bury her slain father. That story is not here.

When Aglovale woke it was to evening sunlight, and there beside the tressel that propped his bed sat Hew on the crazy green steps; and there at large in the open went Favel browsing. Time and space closed in, and he knew himself still in the lap of the old world.

The miracle of grace remained to him without amazement; profound peace kept his heart. He was not ashamed any more, nor hated the mercy he had done, nor cared though men should scorn. And as in contemplation, rapt above process of thought, he was satisfied, soft and dear stole in more perfect understanding of his brother. Like the tender, tremulous point of Hesperus breasting the glow of heaven, stood Percivale, amid his peace, constant, diffident, sure to approve him. The hymn of the child and the prayer of Percivale drifted from the past. "Fairest Lord Jesu, Ruler of all nature, take Thou my heart! Thou who hast called me to forsake my brother, Thee do I worship, fairer than all lights that heaven can boast."

Verily, in the spirit he unawares had followed after Percivale, and nighing the feet of our fair Lord Jesu God, in the spirit there found him. Like Percivale, renouncing the claims of blood and affection, obedient in faith, he had turned and not done that which was right in his own eyes. His reward was with him in this world. For the miracle of grace remained sure to him, though all delusion wrought of natural

accidence passed ; the literal marvel fell away lightly, as falls from the growing bud the sheath that has served its turn.

For right so came the boy Hew, timid and eager, and with his simple prate he by degrees filled out the blank overpast to the best of his knowledge. Of the noble lady he told, her goodness and charity, how Heaven-sent she appeared and assured his recovery from deep trance, and purveyed that fair cover in place of rotten rick-cloth. How by the mercy of God he had been knocked senseless through the giving of a rust-eaten spike, and so had lain dark till after the night of fire. Yea so ! how there was now no roof to lay him under ; for that same night fire took hold on the mill and swept off the thatch, and he therein might have come to perish had not God taken keep of his head otherwise.

Then as Sir Aglovale held still saying nothing, the boy, weeping, spoke for the old man in his unhappiness, who was too sorry and ashamed to come near unbidden.

"Go bring him," said Aglovale ; and lying alone he saw above his head the carven rood replaced, and meditated on the miracle of grace within his heart passing sweet and sure.

Came the old man in crazy extremes of remorse. Sir Aglovale spoke peace and touched him ; still he maundered pitifully ; now saying that the wrath of God burnt his roof from him since he denied it to such an one ; now saying that sure his poor roof had been spared of God had but such an one rested beneath it ; for he was not as knights are, bloody and vengeable, but meek and merciful out of reason.

"Cease," said Sir Aglovale, "for you charge God foolishly." Then he sighed, and said, "With all our foolish presumptions may Heaven have patience."

In due time he came to hear how Sir Agravaine also presumed foolishly ; for the youth confessed how he had sped the deceit as to aid above mortal means. He chafed and rebuked.

"I charge you speak not again on a matter that concerns you not, lest haply you speak lies unaware. And I counsel you if ever you meet these knights again, clear your deceit ; but take heed you name me not."

"Sir, I know not their names."

"Well!" said Aglovale; "if that be so, well! I leave you your excuse." Then he asked, "Who told you my name?"

"Sir, have I uttered your name?" stammered Hew.

"Who told you my name?"

"I knew you again, Sir Aglovale. Not at first. But seeing that shirt next your skin, and under your shirt what I saw, then I knew you. Yea, sir, I am that unlucky wight that you cursed so, that was witness—would to God I had never seen."

Sir Aglovale turned away his head, and Hew crept away disheartened, for his worship and his dread were equal and very great. The blind woman came to serve in his stead. She ventured a humble petition: Would the noble knight put his hand on the child and bless him for his comfort.

"Good woman, small comfort lies in blessing of mine."

"Sir, he complains that once you did curse him horribly; and sooth he has gone amiss sadly since."

She took up tale from the beginning. When her man turned his life, he vowed that this grandchild, the last of his stock, should be put young to a religious life; and when the boy was but ten years of age, he was taken and given up to God; and maintenance for old age was also bestowed away with him their natural prop. Alas! she said, some of his worldly wits her good man left behind him in the quag. Yearly the boy visited them again, but this year he returned out of season and refused return.

"Came he without licence?"

She began to whimper: said she made bold to think he ought not to be enforced to religious life against his will; said he was hardly used for no fault; he was young, tender, soft-hearted, open to horror; and horror had come upon him in such sort that his mind was possessed in dreams with terrors of Hell, so that he could not sleep peaceably. And the Prior, a hard man, ordained whipping for his cure, till he could endure no longer, but privily forsook his place and came away.

"Good woman," said Sir Aglovale, "I think as you do,

this is some concern of mine. I promise you to do what I can for remedy."

So the fond woman, deeming he meant intercession with the stern Prior, took lightly his bidding to Hew, who, taking up that presumption, came and readily proffered and promised to amend his fault as Sir Aglovale should order.

But the kindness of Sir Aglovale looked another way. Plain he read the lack of honesty in the poor youth's admission of his folly and cowardice.

Said he: "I will well to aid you. There is but one way, and that you should know as well as I can tell you: go hence straightway, return again and submit yourself to the Prior."

"But, sir," panted Hew, "he will have me whipped without mercy."

Said Sir Aglovale, grim, "I do hope so, as you deserve it. And I do know you are stout enough, for so I found you."

Said Hew presently, "Yea so he was, but that was no remedy to cure him to peace."

"You say sooth," said Sir Aglovale. "It is no remedy to a spirit diseased. But thus shall you do for your own cure: pray you nightly for us whom Maker God has the heart to damn that He make us also heart to be damned in His worship. An you pray so, honestly and perfectly, that craven spirit which is devil's scum will no more trouble your rest."

But Hew, even as he stood there considering this saying, was dimly aware of the source and stand of this counsel; and he knew that then and there that craven spirit was stricken out of him.

"I go," he said.

Then Sir Aglovale taught him a message to the Prior: that he purposed here to set up a religious house, and prayed and required his immediate presence for counsel and order. Then he bade him mount Favel and be speedy.

So Hew departed; and by the time he came again with the Prior, Sir Aglovale was mended of wounds, bruises, and disjointing. But the hawk-look was gone from his face, and he fought left-handed never more.

The Prior rode his mule, but Hew came afoot, for Breuse Saunce Pité had met them by the way and had taken Favel.

Said Hew ruefully, "Indeed, I could not then lightly avoid him and flee, being, sir, in no good case for riding at that time by your favour." And that good hard man the Prior confirmed his excuse.

Now hereby shortly Sir Aglovale came to be stinted of further quest.

So soon as he had ordained and authorized all as he would with the Prior, he made for Breuse Saunce Pité to recover Favel, and by him was shamefully taken and imprisoned. For he overcame Sir Breuse, who lightly yielded, and, like the fox he was, promised to make good his loss of Favel, saying that good horse was done for, broken-backed of a recent encounter. So, with a show of straight dealing and of deference, he brought Sir Aglovale to choose from his stables, where fed the best horses in the realm of Logris. There sound in hide and limb stood Favel. Sir Aglovale turned upon the cheat, set foot on a trap prepared, and fell down a shaft into a cave underground.

There he wore out all the rest of the year sworn to the Holy Quest, and many a day on. Cut off from the light of day, from sun and rain and all that grows, from human fellowship, alone with himself, with life past to brood upon, with no present hope, no pleasant play of the senses to shutter the issue from this life to another, thus for a year he lived entombed. The measure of a day went by the pangs of hunger; the run of the seasons he told by cold more or less rigorous.

Yet even in these conditions the miracle of grace remained to him; the devils of solitude did him no harm; the blessing of untroubled sleep never forsook him; he could lift his heart in contemplation; he could spread his mind to the wonder of great truths; resignation quickened and rose ardent as an homage rendered; and ever fields of rare remembrance, sweet and fresh, were close about him; and dear and constant held his belief in communion of heart with Percivale.

Far off in the city of Sarras, Percivale and his two fellows

were in like case ; they, too, lay imprisoned in a dark hole. But such grace had they of our Lord that He sent them there the Holy Grail to sustain them, and so were they fed and made glad. And at the end of that imprisonment they came forth to glory and worship, as my most dear Master tells.

Not so Sir Aglovale. At the end of his imprisonment he came forth to another lot.



## CHAPTER XVII

**S**IR BREUSE SAUNCE PITÉ was a valiant scoundrel who for choice fought cowardly and unknighly, and ever escaped by the speed of his horse, till the day came when Kay the Seneschal matched him and took him. For Sir Kay knew his manner of old ; and so when a knight started suddenly from cover, and bore down upon him before he could feutre his spear, he thought he should know him, and accordingly met him foully for his part ; he avoided the spear and slew the knight's good horse. And that was Favel.

"Now," said Kay, "there shall be fighting to the finish." And he lighted down fairly, tied up his horse, and went to blows with Sir Breuse so heartily that within an hour he had him wounded on his knees praying mercy.

"By no means," said Kay, "so fight on or die. I know you for Sir Breuse Saunce Pité, and no pity shall you get of me."

"Ah, gentle knight, spare me as a knight overcome and yelden to your mercy."

"By no means," said Kay. "Know that I am Sir Kay the Seneschal, who am ever called ungentle, and reck naught of being so called." Therewith he rashed off the helm of Breuse Saunce Pité to have stricken off his head.

"Hold hand," cried Breuse, "or you slay one that is your fellow." Then he told how he had prisoner a knight of the Round Table and a king's son ; and except Sir Kay spared his life, his brother Sir Bertelot would certainly for vengeance slay that knight.



Now, Sir Breuse was a liar who aforetime had given out a wrong name for a trick on a knight of the Round Table, so Kay, with some suspicion, asked who was the knight.

"Sir Aglovale de Galis, son and brother to King Pellinore and Sir Lamorak."

"Sir Aglovale de Galis is Sir Aglovale de Galis," said Kay, shortly.

His sword was itching in his hand, howbeit he paused to consider. Breuse was a liar on double suspicion; for Sir Kay, from the unguarded mouth of Sir Agravaine, had a certain suspicion of his own on the fate of Sir Aglovale.

"Well," said Kay, "I will strike no bargain, but I will see your knight."

He bound Sir Breuse, mounted and walked him away to his own castle gates to see out his game.

Came Sir Bertelot the one-handed to the wicket for parley; and soon Sir Aglovale was had up again from that hole into the light of day. So there they were, two and two: Sir Bertelot and Sir Aglovale on the one side, Sir Kay and Sir Breuse on the other, and the barred wicket between.

Sir Aglovale came out of long darkness bleached as white as bone, beard and hair untrimmed, gaunt with hunger, scowling with narrowed eyes unaccustomed to light, and scarred and disfigured withall. Through the pales Sir Kay examined him as he shrank from the light, and he laughed upon him for a fraud.

"No, Sir Breuse, you win not your life by this means. This is not Sir Aglovale de Galis, as I had cause for to doubt."

"Sir, you mistake. I am Sir Aglovale de Galis."

"I know better. This is too paltry a sham!"

"Sir, I am he indeed; and you, I think, are my fellow Sir Kay the Seneschal."

Sir Kay looked close again and could not know him. Still Sir Aglovale affirmed.

"I will see," said Kay. "Here, Sir Bertelot, take in here this your brother's sword, stand off and toss it to your prisoner."

So he did, and Sir Aglovale caught it with his right hand.

"Disproof!" said Kay, "for Sir Aglovale was left-handed."

"I was. I have lost the play of that hand."

Sir Kay paid no heed, but turned upon Sir Breuse and swung out his sword. Sir Bertelot on his side did likewise.

"Speak! Speak out, Sir Aglovale, for my life and your own!"

"Villain, no. I will not speak for your life."

At that Sir Kay turned short and looked again. He was sure by his eyes, yet still he paused.

"I will make sure. Strip your man shirtless. I will see what record he has on his skin."

So Sir Bertelot did, and, as Sir Kay bade, put Sir Aglovale backward and close to view. Plain enough he bore such marks as Sir Kay himself brought away from Sir Turquine.

"Well, well," said Kay, "so it is Sir Aglovale de Galis! So it is! Howbeit, Sir Breuse, as to your life I made no bargain."

He hung awhile this way and that with his sword, for he greatly desired to make an end of Breuse Saunce Pité, and he cared not a rap for Sir Aglovale, and begrudged him fellowship. And yet it was shame to the Round Table to rate rescue of a fellow so low against riddance of such vermin as Breuse Saunce Pité. Sir Bertelot watched him with his sword ready also.

Said Kay, very glum, He was sorry Sir Aglovale was his fellow; as it was so he must needs leave alive Sir Breuse Saunce Pité.

While Sir Aglovale was made ready to be delivered, washed, fed, armed, Sir Kay waited with Sir Breuse under sword; and ever he cursed and fumed while he waited, savage as a mastiff robbed of his bone.

Back to the wicket Sir Bertelot brought Sir Aglovale upon question after Favel; and Sir Breuse declared that now, indeed, Favel was slain, and charged on Sir Kay a wanton slaughter. He avowed it with a snarl.

Said Aglovale, grieved, "That was ill done to slay a good horse without necessity."

"Say you so!" cried Kay, in a heat, "you who come to deliverance by these means!" Then he eased his spleen with language, telling he had little joy of that bargain he had made.

"Gramercy, fair sir," said Aglovale, "I am greatly beholden to you. Nathless, I would the means were of clean knighthood, and more to your worship."

"O Hell!" cried Kay. "Sir Aglovale de Galis to prate to me of clean knighthood! Well, well, Sir Breuse, you have your life passing cheap. As for Sir Aglovale, an he like not the means to his deliverance, he may stay and rot. For I care not to take him up, and I leave him on your hands."

Therewith Sir Kay turned his back, cursing his bootless ado; he mounted, and no prayer moved him; he rode away and left Sir Aglovale to the wrong side of the wicket.

Breuse Saunce Pité on his side stumbled to the wicket and leaned, and he and his brother looked after Sir Kay till he was out of sight, dumb from blank amazement. Then Breuse turned round, and looked in upon the discarded knight with a laugh. Then Sir Bertelot put hand upon Sir Aglovale and drew him back, and Sir Breuse came in reeling like a drunken man; and he laughed like a drunken man as he came and put hand upon him also. They held him up between them, for he could scarcely stand; and they looked at him, and they looked at each other, and cursed a little softly.

"Now, fair brother," said Sir Bertelot, "give me leave to do what I will with this knight."

"Nay, nay," said Breuse Saunce Pité, "but I will do what I will with him."

"So be it. I hold it will be all one."

Said Sir Breuse, soberly, "Sir Aglovale, I have no will to keep you any longer prisoner."

Said Sir Bertelot, soberly, "Yea, my mind is to set you free."

Sir Aglovale took their words in a sense, stunned and heavy,

past pleading ; and Sir Bertelot, seeing how it was, thrust wide the wicket before him.

"Oh, men on earth are devils !" said Aglovale. "Ye ! make an end of this cruel play."

Said Sir Breuse, "Truly, fair sir, your life has stood me for mine. Yea, though you would not speak for mine, it has ! Take your life to your own keeping again, as is fair."

Said Sir Bertelot, "Fair sir, your case sticks us men. Go your ways after Sir Kay and give to him my brother's title."

"O Maker of marvels !" said Aglovale, faintly. "Good-now ! Give room, sirs, and let me kneel."

Said Sir Bertelot, as he kneeled down, "While you are at it, Sir Aglovale, tell God Almighty we two are not quite so bad as He thinks."

For further proof they provided him a horse as good as Favel. He accorded no thanks, and they pretended no further compunction.

"'Tis pity," said Sir Aglovale, "that ye have not set yourselves to be noble knights and to eschew villainy. Sooth, after this year of pondering your exceeding villainy, I marvel wherefore ye deal now so fairly."

Said Sir Breuse, "I will tell you. Sir Kay has beaten me out and out."

Said Sir Bertelot, "A manner of fellowship, fair sir ; you have no such name yourself, to boast your noblesse upon us."

So they flung words a little, rather stark than courteous, and Sir Aglovale departed.

He had ridden but a furlong down from the castle when a knight came riding hard, who cried defiance, smote him down, and bade him rise and do battle. He was weak as a child, and straight he offered to yield.

"Ah, coward, will you have it so !" cried the other, and, leaping upon him, rushed off his helm. "Now, villain, whichever you be, I will slay you, or you shall deliver up your prisoner, Sir Aglovale de Galis."

"Content you, fair sir. Here I deliver him up. I am Sir Aglovale."

"Take keep how you say, lest I answer upon your body you are not Sir Aglovale, but one of two villains, Sir Breuse or Sir Bertelot."

"Patience, sir, and spare me. Sir Breuse and Sir Bertelot have proved by me that they are not utterly villainous, for they have set me at large."

"This telling is hard to believe. On the faith of your body, are you indeed Sir Aglovale?"

"Faith, I am he. Sir Kay has proved and found by my body who I am; and you, as I suppose, have met with Sir Kay."

That was so. The knight told his name: Sir Gareth of Orkney, King Arthur's nephew. And he told how he came. As he hove at conjecture beside a dead horse, Sir Kay came by, who cursed and deplored because he had taken Breuse Saunce Pité to slay, and Sir Aglovale de Galis had hindered, so he had to let him go. But Sir Gareth, when he understood how he had deserted his fellow, left him hastily, and rode to rescue. For that one son of Lot was altogether noble and gentle, and he took no part with his brothers in murder and vengeance, nor was he ever of their counsel.

"Now, Sir Aglovale, I require you to take my bidding at this time. Give over to me your shield, your helm, and your horse, and take mine instead."

"What you will, sir, I am yelden," said Aglovale, and did as he bade.

So with that change they set on together, and rode a good pace till they came nigh after Sir Kay, going his way softly.

"Now will I teach this old shrew," said Gareth.

Kay looked back, and thought he knew who were these two coming hard after him. Hastily he made ready, for lo! Sir Aglovale cried defiance and feutred his spear, and Sir Gareth hove aside.

Down went Sir Kay at the shock of onset, and measured the ground a spear's length behind his horse, greatly astonished to be so worsted of Sir Aglovale. When he made to rise he was trampled down again, for the horse that was of Sir

Breuse's training took his rider unawares, plunging upon the prostrate knight.

"Ah, Sir Gareth, do you look on to see this unknighly practice?"

Neither answered him, and he got to his feet enraged.

"I saved you your life, despicable knight though you be! Would I had slain Breuse Saunce Pité without scruple. Then had the world been well rid of two blots at once. Light down and fight, or I hough that beast an I get the chance."

So down afoot they fought lustily till first breath.

"Now hold hand," said Kay. "Sir Breuse, I know, never kept this fighting cock. So as I know you, Sir Gareth, I yield you the battle, to be quit of this maugre and pretence."

"Not so easy!" said Gareth. "I quit you not save upon conditions; for you have done shamefully to leave a fellow of ours to perilous misery."

"Well, well! What conditions?"

"First that you take keep of Sir Aglovale, as he is too wasted with misery to take keep of himself, and follow after him from this time forward till he come safe and sound to the court of King Arthur; and there, secondly, shall you truly and fully rehearse your doings; and, thirdly, naming your name Sir Kay Saunce Pité."

Said Kay, "So be it. As for your naming, I care naught; and as for rehearsing, I need not your telling; and as for Sir Aglovale, I will answer for him. Forsooth he has not the face to answer for himself, as Breuse Saunce Pité has turned him out."

Said Aglovale, "Sir, you charge him wrongly. Another defaced me so, or ever Sir Breuse took me."

"Say you so!" said Gareth. "And have you had encounter with worse than Sir Breuse Saunce Pité?"

"Forbear to ask upon this, for I list not to tell you."

"Ho!" said Kay. "Take not these mumps afore our lord Arthur, as he will have all adventures of the Quest told upon oath, and put upon record."

But the matter fell out not as Kay supposed.

The year of the Quest was long overpast when Aglovale came in again to his place. Most of the fellowship had returned for the ensuing feast of Pentecost. Some never returned at all: not Tristram, who abandoned the Quest for his love, and King Mark slew him; not Dinadan, for he loved Lamorak, and so the sons of Lot slew him; not Uwaine, Arthur's nephew by his sister Morgan le Fay, him Gawaine slew unhappily, not knowing his best cousin and friend; not King Bagdemagus, him also Gawaine slew.

Sir Galahad had not returned, nor his two fellows, Sir Percivale and Sir Bors. Sir Launcelot had lately come in; for half a year he had sailed the seas with Galahad his son, in the ship that bore the dead body of the maiden Saint; he and Sir Pelleas and none other of the fellowship had come nigh to the Holy Mystery all had sought, and they in presence but dimly had perceived.

Among the dead was Sir Aglovale already reckoned when he came in with Sir Kay. Many of his fellows looking him in the face did not know him. Gaheris came near and looked upon him, and for the moment did not know him by his own handiwork. Then said one in his hearing, "That is Sir Aglovale! By his walk I know him. Who would know him by his face!" Gaheris turned sharp, and lo! his dead man it was indeed who came by and set living eyes against him.

The murderer kept his countenance, and no sign betokened confusion save a slight ebb of colour to the stroke of surprise, and a heightened flush to a touch of shame. As for Aglovale, he was all unmoved from the heart out; neither shame nor resentment remained to him; indifferently he admired the firmness of the man.

Sir Gaheris looked about for his brother Agravaine. He found him with Sir Kay at him, railing against their brother Sir Gareth, who, he said, had despitefully induced him to undertake dog's work, to follow and safeguard Sir Aglovale de Galis.

"Go to! Did he bid you go to Hell?" said Agravaine, and laughed.

"Not so fast. Sir Aglovale is no further there than here."

"Show him if you can!"

Sir Gaheris heard, and he gave in his word. "Yea, it is so. I have seen him to know him in spite of appearances."

Sir Agravaine caught back his laugh, wheeled about as Gaheris nodded him, and saw for himself. He muttered, "O gracious Hell!" and shut his mouth. Sir Kay won nothing more to confirm his guess.

Apart together they turned to each other face-fallen.

Said Agravaine, "Here is shame to me that he has that life of his."

Said Gaheris, "Here is shame to me that he has that face of his. Would to God we had done that business more cleanly!"

Said Agravaine, "There will be heat presently when he is sworn and taken down for record."

Said Gaheris, "Yea, doubtless. And now I shall be at his call to have ado with him. I have no stand to refuse him like the carrion he is, after this foul bungling of ours. Would to God I had never touched the beast!"

Said Agravaine, "Would to God we had put him away more surely! Yet how he came alive passes all wit to guess. Well, after the supper we shall hear."

But the matter fell out not as they supposed.

King Arthur sat in hall when Sir Aglovale came before him, and he knew him at once by the eyes of Pellinore. Mildly he looked upon him, and he spoke with unwonted gentleness; said he had doubted heavily upon his long absence; said he was glad what he dreaded had not befallen; said God be thanked. Aglovale in his heart more than in words thanked him for that kindness.

Now, after supper Sir Kay stood up to fulfil his obligation. He told all through his tale very dryly and completely in every particular.

Sir Aglovale sat quiet under him, and when he had ended offered no word for his part. The audience of knights sat expectant for the King to bid him rise to fill out the tale with



further particulars, and namely how Breuse Saunce Pité showed mercy. But Arthur sat thoughtful awhile, spoke his comment curtly upon Sir Kay, and did not call on Sir Aglovale at all.

At this there was some wonder all round. Kay wondered, and Gaheris; and Aglovale himself was slow to understand, and wondered. Launcelot alone had a deeming that he knew the King's bent. With attentive mind he observed Sir Aglovale. He heard a manner of speaking pass, ungentle and unworthy; for some there were, careless or deliberate, who set their fellow at naught, and would Sir Kay had slain Sir Breuse Saunce Pité before question; in Sir Aglovale's very presence such reflections passed. Still he sat silent under this, and he showed no sign of discomposure till the grave, considerate regard of Launcelot drew his eyes; then the blood rose hot in his face.

Launcelot spoke a word. He said, with a double sense, that such usage as was set upon Sir Aglovale de Galis was passing foul work; even Saunce Pité for shame should have spared him his face.

Aglovale replied, "Ah, sir, good sooth, Sir Breuse did not stamp me so."

Still the King did not look his way nor call him to rise and recount. Then Sir Grifet with his great voice put Arthur in mind to fulfil the record of the Holy Quest, as here was Sir Aglovale to tell his adventures.

Said Arthur, grave and firm, "Let that alone. I have no mind to hear what Sir Aglovale has a mind to tell."

Aglovale, startled, sat up rigid, and stared against the King full and hard, agape and breathless. For the moment he had no other thought than that Arthur was privy to his nephews' villainy, and purposed to cover it.

But before the face of Arthur so dishonouring a suspicion could not stand. The face of Arthur, sombre to sadness, altered before his eyes, hardened, darkened, overawed the insolent affront of his gaze with an access of majestic severity.

Suddenly Aglovale understood: Arthur held him an approved liar worth no credence.

None beside understood save Sir Launcelot. Gaheris and

Agravaine, quite at a loss, looked at each other amazed. To them and to others, that passage of looks and of brief, unaccountable words told nothing, but that for cause unperceived King Arthur was displeased, and Sir Aglovale, insolent, was put out of countenance.

But Launcelot knew that in their midst, yet privily, their lord had spoken in relentless judgment, and their fellow undergone sentence that was very grievous to bear.

Aglovale sat still and silent for a time, while sight and sound about him were unseen, unheard. Then he came out of himself, drew breath, wiped his brow, looked about him comprehensively. The gaze of Launcelot arrested him, grave, considerate, better than compassionate. Aglovale smote down his head.

Then Launcelot likewise smote down his head.

## CHAPTER XVIII

**T**HE next record of Aglovale tells how he meddled with Sir Hermind and lost and won.

When after long absence he returned to Galis, he was slow to learn that old conditions were void. Sir Hermind in fact and in name ruled, and had no mind to lend himself again for mask and tool to his difficult kinsman. Yet knowing the curst unhappy temper of Sir Aglovale, he was patient and considerate, and slow to teach him; and remembering Sir Tor's saying, he may come to rust now he is broken, he took thought to put into his hands many matters of difficulty and moment.

Such charges were those as Sir Aglovale aforetime had chosen for his part to fulfil, and now at request he carried through certain of the sterner needs of government for retribution and exemplary justice. Too thoroughly he performed, with ruthlessness and butchery that Sir Hermind did not approve. But censures now were of no more effect than were counsels to mercy of old. Sir Aglovale paid little heed; rather was he the more extreme as to his mind Sir Hermind inclined too often to leniency, and Galis fared so much the worse. Once he took upon him to deal unauthorized, and Sir Hermind sent warning; twice, and Sir Hermind sent threatening. At last he went too far, and by an outrageous deed provoked stronger measure than words. He defied Sir Hermind's warrant for mercy, granted unwisely to the prayer of an importunate mother, and hanged two dangerous young men, hostages whose lives were forfeit by the treason of their kindred.

The circumstances made Sir Aglovale's offence flagrant and deliberate. On suspicion of his kinsman's inexpedient mildness, he hastened to forestall it with his own harsh justice, and rode hot by night with a single man to claim his hostages from the keeper in charge.

So, as he ordered, within the hour they were prepared and shriven, and brought from hold to the gallows on a bridgeway in the sight of townfolk and friends. Came the messenger riding for life, and delivered Sir Hermind's letters and seal. Sir Aglovale took these and considered, and then gave the word for execution forthright. But here the keeper questioned, remonstrated, warned him that he doubted his authority to deal; and he and all his men refused to serve, and would do naught, as they would have to answer to Sir Hermind.

"As for that, I will have it done," said Sir Aglovale, "and myself I will answer to Sir Hermind. Howbeit I will have this done so you and your men shall stand altogether clear."

Therewith he bade his own man do the work; and he took out his sword, and went and kept the bridge-end against the crowd till the work was done.

He departed, and rode down to Milford Haven to awe other traitors, and left to a more convenient season, as less urgent matter, adjustment and understanding with Sir Hermind.

Soon came summons that struck a pause. He was bidden return straightway to Cardiff, and to bring with him his hangman. He thought fit then to obey; and as he rode he went over the matter in his mind, and so came heavy and sober to Cardiff, and sought audience of his cousin. That was refused him till the day following, when Sir Hermind sat in council.

Sir Aglovale came in with his sword ungirt, sans spurs, shield, helm; and when Sir Hermind saw him so, the least spark of anger died, and he was passing grieved and heavy for that he had to do.

He required Sir Aglovale to give an account of what he had done. So he did faithfully, acknowledging that he had received his order to spare, and had gone against it; and he

asked leave to lay down what firm and weighty reasons there were for so doing. That was refused him. Sir Hermind rehearsed his right to the absolute rule of Galis, by line of inheritance, by consent, by election sanctioned and confirmed of King Arthur; and he required Sir Aglovale to show if he had right to overrule his warrant and denounce his prerogative.

Said Aglovale, "From my birth I belonged to Galis. What I have done was for the weal of Galis. I had no other purpose."

Sir Hermind put down that plea; he was the head of Galis, and the weal of Galis could never be sound while injuriously Sir Aglovale practised against his head. He spoke firm without harsh language; he had not forgot how much he owed to Sir Aglovale, and what strong excuse, by reason of their former footing, there was for him, whose will was long dominant before he was made able and sure enough to cope with wild Galis alone.

But Sir Aglovale put forward no protest on these grounds. He said that verily he had considered that reprieve came rather from Sir Hermind's good heart; and he, slighting it, had purposed to appeal to his good head when he came to render account. Sir Hermind told him that he could not hear him till he had purged his contempt; and Sir Aglovale answered, right so he would, and make reparation all so much as Sir Hermind required.

Full reparation Sir Hermind required: he was to pay down at the gallows-tree the price of blood; he was to take down the dead bodies and carry them to decent burial; he was to withdraw to Cardigan and keep the room of his castle till the following feast of Christmas.

This was stark dealing, and Sir Aglovale was shocked; and so, indeed, were others there present, who, had he revolted to defiance, might have stood by him for his father's sake, and because they were at one with him in this instance as to the unwisdom of Sir Hermind in remitting forfeit.

Against common expectation Sir Aglovale answered submissive; but presently he was more shocked when Sir Hermind

had before him his man, and ordered him to the gallows-tree with his master to take his penalty under the hangman's lash, and with him to go bury the dead.

Said Aglovale for the man: he had done no wrong; he had done his duty, obeying his master without question; what fault there was was his alone. He spoke in vain; and in vain he offered to redeem his man at full blood price; upon all he could say there was answer to confound him from his own harsh doings. He was cruelly hurt. He smote down his head and asked for mercy, pardon for his man. Sir Hermind swore by his head he would not grant it. Aglovale said no more; the taste of bootless humiliation choked him. Sir Hermind required no pledge, but let him go; he had his man for surety.

So in due time Sir Aglovale met his man at the gallows-tree, and each paid his penalty. And they took down the two dead bodies and carried them to burial, to the great delight of townfolk and friends, so that the keeper and Sir Lamiel of Cardiff, with all their men, had much ado to deliver them clear.

And when all was done and masses said, Sir Aglovale's man stood up before him, plucked from his coat his badge, and flung it underfoot.

"Do me right, my lord; pay me the price of my blood, for I quit your service. I will serve a master who can ensure me a whole skin when I do his orders."

Sir Lamiel of Cardiff cursed the man fiercely, as Sir Aglovale stood for a moment out of words. Then said he, "Fair sir, let be, he asks but right."

He paid the full price he had offered for redemption; and the man took it shifting and muttering.

"If he will have me, I will serve Sir Hermind."

Said Sir Aglovale, "You serve him well already." He turned to Sir Lamiel and charged him with a message to Sir Hermind, and prayed him to report fairly, and to speak well for his man, an honest and trusty knave. Then he departed for Cardigan.

Right heavy at heart was Sir Hermind before Sir Lamiel came in. What he had done he believed to be right and just and needful, and he might not repent; yet he was greatly troubled. He was noble, upright, and scrupulous, and his gain over Sir Aglovale smote him with compunction. Had Sir Aglovale come in armed and defied him, had he denounced his failing, had he opened out as to their old terms of joint authority and reproached him for ingratitude, had he claimed his privilege to justify himself in battle, then had he played a part right and honourable, and those present in council would incline to worship and esteem him better than now in effect they did. But he had come in surrendered, he had owned and bowed to his authority, he had petitioned and been denied, he had met unforeseen rigour and had not revolted.

Sir Lamiel came in and told all he had witnessed. "And Sir Aglovale prays you take well his fair greeting of farewell, for he thinks to have done his last for the welfare of Galis; so God keep you your heart as you have proved it upon him, and all is well."

"This is too hard for me!" said Sir Hermind, grieving.

Said Sir Lamiel, "Oh, sir, pray God for yourself and Galis that you win quit of his danger."

"God help and reward Sir Aglovale de Galis. I think him the truest man alive."

But Sir Lamiel doubted. "Such meekness is not according to his nature. Trust him not!"

Next day Sir Hermind rode forth with his young son Mariet, and did not return.

Meanwhile, across the hills and valleys of Galis, then fresh with the lilies and palm-wands of Easter-tide, Sir Aglovale had taken his way, sorrow-laden, to withdraw to the narrow room of his castle walls at Cardigan. He knew well that his course was over in the land he was born to rule. Sir Hermind was fit and able enough, and his meddling was needless and mischievous. He came to Cardigan thwarted, defeated, weary of vain effort. Two young squires, bastard sons to Sir Durnor, were fighting at play on the castle green. The elder

and the taller went down shocked over his horse's tail. Sir Aglovale smiled at that.

That night he could not sleep, and according to custom he rose and walked. From the bed where Percivale had left him he went, and roamed the vacant chambers where sweet Gilleis had lived and died, and the hall where Sir Marhaus had thundered from heaven; he climbed up under the stars, to look down upon the ceaseless river, and the outlying isle where her dear body was a part of the mould, and afar on the span of bridge where Brose drove him off and drubbed him; and then back again he came to the bed where Percivale had left him. It was the brink of Easter Day, midnight past, but still dark, with not a hint of dawn behind the hills. He lay down once more and slept, sound without a dream, as ever he slept since the night of avowal there.

Came the voice of Percivale crying him awake. "Aglovale, Aglovale!"

Beside his bed stood Percivale, pale as are the dead, tears in his eyes, his arms wide. Against his face dawned a light so clear that it faded as stars fade at sunrise.

Aglovale answered and sprang. He gathered great darkness to his breast. So he knew that Percivale was dead.



## CHAPTER XIX

**T**HROUGH Cardigan Castle and town went stir and buzz on Sir Aglovale's return, for rumour of variance and defiance was already about. Old knights and retainers spoke of the brim and merry day when he had gathered round him all with a grievance in Galis, and mischief had threatened till King Pellinore came down with a strong hand to cut it short. So now they questioned what manner of day might be at hand; certain it would not be merry.

But on the morrow conjecture was stricken to a pause, for Sir Aglovale was found tranced and rigid as once before; and so he lay for two days, till by blood-letting and exorcism he was restored to his senses. His leech, that same good wise-acre, again warned him against strong meats and wine, and against deadly sin, and namely warned him against hardness of heart. Another two days went by, and still his purposes lay dark. It was told how all that while he rested and meditated, gazing out with level eyes against the horizon, from dawn to dark, from dark to dawn, without sleep.

Too far away did Sir Aglovale set his gaze to take note of a noble knight, passing down, as the sun went low, to the cover of Cardigan walls. Indifferently he heard that one was come to the castle gates who would not give his name save by the mouth of a fair child to Sir Aglovale himself. Indifferently he lifted his eyes as young Mariet came before him.

From the first moment his heart gave towards this boy, who in feature was strangely like Lamorak at his age, and like Percivale in his delicate grace. He was solemn as death.

"Fair child," said Aglovale, gently, "speak in God's name!

Say who you are, and who sends you." He marvelled greatly, but sooth he needed not the telling.

"Sir," said Mariet, "my father, Sir Hermind, sends me before him to bespeak him a hearing on a matter to concern you both. Below at the gates he waits to know if it be your will to receive him at all, or secretly, or openly."

"I will well," said Aglovale. He rose unsteadily, and laid his hand heavily on the boy. "Be my stay, fair child, an you can bear more than a little."

"Yea, sir, I hope I can," said Mariet, and braced his slight strength to the weight.

So Sir Aglovale staggered down into hall, and bade the gates be opened, and sent out the two young squires his nephews, and came to the threshold with the child still under his hand.

"Enter, Sir Hermind!" he called. "Enter to me, fair lord and cousin, as I may not quit the room of these walls to come out to you at my own pleasure."

Straightway Sir Hermind lighted down and came close, and they looked each other hard in the visage till both were satisfied. Yet neither offered the kiss at that time.

Said Sir Aglovale, "Fair lord, put your hand upon me and come in." And so he brought him into hall an honoured guest, to the great astonishment of all there; and he set him at the board, and together they eat and drank.

Never could Sir Hermind quite love his strange kinsman; never could he quite pity him. Under his hand he felt him totter, he saw him aged, broken, worn, he heard him speak deference; and in his heart he worshipped him, weak and sad and meek, knowing him aloof and far from need of pity and love.

They came to private speech that night after the supper.

"Fair lord," said Sir Aglovale, "waste no doubt on what you have come to say. However it be, my will is to take it as it is meant."

Thereupon Sir Hermind choked and swallowed before he could bring it out.

"As you say, so keep. Sir Aglovale, I mean to give you my son Mariet if you will take him."

Startled and amazed beyond measure, Sir Aglovale stammered after him.

"You mean to give me your son Mariet if I will take him! God in heaven, this is beyond me!"

His blank bewilderment knocked Sir Hermind hard.

"God's truth!" said he, wording low and strong, "well I know you could make of my son a better man than his father. Yea, for a man of singular worth and integrity you have made from beginnings that, to speak plain, did not promise so much excellence."

"Nay," stammered Aglovale, "Percivale was born excellent, but I saw his promise before others."

"I go not so far as to speak of Sir Percivale. But as to you, Sir Aglovale—oh, 'tis pity you have no son of your own body to bring up after you."

"Cease, cease. You look in the dark. We live all in the dark here below. Nay, pity were any issue of mine to run on! Cease, you say too much for me."

Sir Hermind would not cease; he went on to tell Sir Aglovale in what light he saw him, and held him dumb with amazement. Only a pair well matched in honesty could so encounter for good; each at his disadvantage was exposed to no contumely. High-minded above scruples of pride and shame, the one said what he had to say without a doubt, and the other heard him so as he meant. Aglovale could not speak. He smote down his head in true humility that has no taint of bitterness. As soon as he could he asked as to Mariet, and Sir Hermind called in his son and bade him answer for himself.

The boy said simply that his father's will was his, and that he also had learned to worship Sir Aglovale.

"Ah, Sir Hermind," said Aglovale, "have you taught him so little of me that he knows of no blame?"

"He knows enough, as you may ask him."

Aglovale eyed the boy sadly. "I tell you, child, the

worst you can have heard against me was true, and short of the truth."

"Fair sir, but you know not what is said; and well I know it is not true at all."

Said Aglovale, patiently, "Say out now what is said."

"Sir, that you are not thoroughly honest and loyal at heart, but a close traitor."

"What—now?" cried Aglovale.

"Yea, sir, here and now."

Aglovale turned upon Sir Hermind with a faint smile.

"And so you came to assay me?"

"To justify you."

"Fair lord, that was nobly done, but it was needless. Waste no care on me, waste not your son on me, an that be all you came for."

"Not all. Take you my son for his good, as for his good I give him up to you. Mend him of my faults. Make him in head and heart stronger than I to rule Galis when he shall be called. Take him as you took Sir Percivale, and may God reward him to you as well."

At that Sir Aglovale forgot their presence, and gazed worlds beyond them; and silent they waited, marvelling to see that stern and unlovely visage alter and relax, and glow to a vision remote, as a crag takes up light from the sun departed. He came to them again, weak and shaken.

"Thanks be to God Almighty in all His ways," he said faintly; and soon, more strongly, "Gentle hearts, as God only knows, I am grateful for these your good ways towards me."

"Take up, then, my son in God's name."

He stayed from answer, and, kneeling down, gave himself to prayer awhile, Sir Hermind and Mariet kneeling with him.

Then he stood and said, "Not as I took Percivale: him I took and kept in ignorance, to his sorrow later."

He took Mariet by the hand, and painfully told him, while he shrank, of much iniquity done; and told him how he had shamed and troubled his father's house; and

told him namely how his son unborn died for his sins in the womb.

Cried Mariet, shaking, "I know, I know all that, but I know better."

Said Sir Hermind, "God 'a mercy, Sir Aglovale, cut this short! For, look you, the best the child knows of you is also short of the truth."

He broke off as the folly and wrong of his silence to Percivale cut home. Deaf to the voice of Sir Hermind, inwardly he heard the earnest cry, "Brother Sir Aglovale, I swear I love you;" and the face of Percivale, child and man, weeping for him, made dim his eyes. Mariet was kneeling, holding his knees; he put down his hand and felt cold fingers and a passive head. Mariet, with all his generous faith, had no heart's-giving as yet.

"God help me, child, to do by you better than by Percivale." He bowed his head and wept heavily, as it were for the burial of Percivale. "Fair cousins, give me room awhile for a grief that is all my own," he said faintly. "I am too spent at this time to hanel joy also."

Sooth his pious old leech had left him too little blood to carry him through: he ended in a swoon. Sir Hermind watched him out of it and into sleep; for that night he slept again, to dreamless peace. It was wonder to see man alive so rest like one of the blessed dead.

In due form, according to law and religion, before God and man, Sir Aglovale took Mariet from the hands of his father. And the same day that this was accomplished came Sir Lamiel of Cardiff with a great plump of spears and beset the gates, calling on high to Sir Aglovale to come out and answer for his treason, or deliver up Sir Hermind and his young son.

Then there was sport; Sir Hermind prayed Sir Aglovale to lend him his harness, and so armed he went out and smote down Sir Lamiel at the barriers, and six others beside, with one spear. Then he turned in again, and Mariet came out lightly, took Sir Lamiel by the finger, and brought him in to ease his mind and to better his judgment.

But that sturdy knight came to no clear understanding, and ever doubted there was some foul practice behind the fair show put before him. Privily he warned Sir Hermind how once Sir Aglovale had carried off the boy Percivale, and kept him by the sword from his brothers till he worked his ill-will, driving Sir Durnor out of Galis; and how after that he had broken faith, and again carried off the boy to sea till Sir Lamorak granted him all his demands. After this manner, he said, did Sir Aglovale fulfil the fealty he had vowed with a show of towardness. Yet his brothers all, of their goodness, were close, and for his credit cloked the matter as best they might. But ever he would take advantage of forbearance, and head as he chose in maugre and contempt. His father, King Pellinore, was more shrewd in his dealings, turned him adrift when he proved curst and intolerable; on a flourish of disaffection laid him up in irons here in his own castle of Cardigan, with him, Sir Lamiel, for his keeper.

"Gramercy, Sir Lamiel, for your counsel and good will; but I tell you I shall not require you for any such service. And I warn you, utter not such malignant stuff against Sir Aglovale in Galis, or by my head you shall go elsewhere to rue it."

Said Sir Lamiel, "Fair lord, you play it off well."

"Look you! I have played off my son Mariet in this game, and count him well lost to Sir Aglovale's adoption."

"Fie! Has he not sons enough of his own on the ground! Marry! your gentle among those kites!"

"What sons?"

"Whose are those two squires swart and bold-eyed? Have you no eyes to see?"

"I have seen—I have asked. They are bastards, and Sir Durnor's."

"So he pleases to say. Be not so sure. By your leave I will venture the question."

So he did. Sir Aglovale stiffened and eyed him intent a moment.

"To the best of my belief they are not mine, but Sir Durnor's."

"Neither? By the faith of your body?"

"How, sir? Let such asking be put upon mothers of sons. Neither these nor any sons have been brought home to me."

"All played off, forsooth!" returned Sir Lamiel.

Cried Sir Hermind, "Hold! I will hear no more. This cast is too base."

"Fair sir, not a whit. I have known Sir Aglovale twice as long as you. I tell you before his face he has too unclean a record to be fit to touch your son without offence to your worship and that of your noble lady. There be some few in Galis who rear up sons that they doubt on his account. Sir, I would say more but that I am under his roof."

Said Sir Aglovale, "Under this roof you never had cause to say so much. Your keeping was proof enough!"

Upon that Sir Lamiel used terms so strong that Sir Hermind denied him further audience, and he departed in dudgeon from Cardigan.

But he left Sir Hermind troubled.

"I deemed him a noble knight, staunch and upright."

"I know him, and so he is."

"He interprets you vilely."

Said Sir Aglovale, after a pause, "Fair lord, 'tis well you should hear what reason he has.

"As you must know, my father, King Pellinore, once punished me hard. Here in Cardigan he left me close prisoned, and Sir Lamiel he set in charge. I was very strictly kept; he was neither harsh nor kind, but exact upon an irksome duty. So for near half a year under this roof each occupied his place, with a brief interchange of words twice daily.

"Once the wind blew over the sound of a sweet shrill laugh, and his voice imperative hushing it. So only did I know his young wife was with him to lighten his dreary days. I was hot and restless for a day or more; the fret wore off; that hushing of his was final. I never set eyes upon that fair lady till the day of release.

"My brother Tor came with order of release, and he wept for joy and sorrow to see me. I staggered on the stairway, off

my balance at first stepping free, and at that he took me off my feet and carried me. Half blind he blundered, and before Sir Lamiel could stay us we had startled in her privacy his fair wife. I saw her very fair as she rose in a flutter, and without keep I regarded her. She stopped dead and returned my gaze with a face of eager compassion, while her colour rose and paled again. She turned to her lord with a deep sigh, and sank into his arms swooning. And so her happy wedlock was blighted."

Said Sir Hermind, "Was it so? Now I partly guess—not altogether."

"Sooth, the case should not be incredible. My mother, when she carried me, looked on the Questing Beast, and some do see a trace. But Sir Lamiel held the truth incredible when some months later his wife was brought to bed of a girl, swart like me, with a trick of face like mine. Though I was in irons, though I never saw human creature save in his presence, he could not be satisfied."

"You were altogether clear by absolute proof."

"Fair lord, at that time the name I had told to such effect."

"Why do you tell this tale?"

"Fair lord, at this time the name I had tells to some effect."

"I look to amend that somewhat."

"It is no use."

"Refuse not that is your due, Sir Aglovale. Here in Galis I have more credit than I deserve, and you by so much the less."

"As to that, you and I have not in the past been altogether open and void of deceit for our ends in Galis. Cloke and mask was our habit for long. We sought no confidence, we gained none, we deserve none. So let be each to each as we were, and God grant so as we shall be, without a doubt to the end, notwithstanding broken teeth."

For all Sir Aglovale could say, Sir Hermind would pursue his vain purpose. But he won few to believe that he in pure honour and worship had bestowed his son to the keep of Sir Aglovale, whom he would no more suffer to meddle in Galis.



The leaden year wore on to the feast of Christmas.

Now, when the midnight mass was over, Sir Aglovale went down and issued to the night alone to take the breath of enlargement between the snow and the stars. That natural move of his was shrewdly awaited. He saw a shadow suddenly stretch out beside his own on the moonlit snow; quick he wheeled; quicker came down a stab, smitten so deep and hard that he pitched face forward to a stunning fall. So the villain left him, and fled, and was never traced.

He was found with a knife stuck in his back with a missive spitted upon it. The blow had shattered the seal, and in the flurry and dismay ensuing that missive was hastily opened and read. The thing was horrible: there, writ large, was greeting for peace and good will from Sir Hermind.

But Sir Aglovale, when he came to his senses and had knowledge of the missive, showed little discomposure. He had it spread open before his eyes, and read it, twisting a dreary smile. But soon he perceived too much intelligence in the eyes about him, and, looking at the broken seal, understood that privity was unhappily gone. Then he was discomposed out of measure. He strove to speak, called "Mariet!" with a great expense of blood, and swooned away.

The knife had gone through to the lungs dangerously far; he was warned for his life against speaking then awhile.

Mariet came to the fore. He crept up, sobbing miserably, but at a look and a touch he was sobbing more for joy.

"Fair lord, you do know—you do know! Fair lord, let me speak out to these present. He knows! Sir Aglovale does know, that Sir Hermind had no thought nor part in this wickedness."

He kissed the hand that held him; he ventured close and kissed Sir Aglovale's cheek. So was love right filial first delivered.

The child was sage beyond his years; he considered how Sir Aglovale had not the art of writing, nor voice to indite, so himself he sought a clerk, and a letter to Sir Hermind was written, and read out to Sir Aglovale for sanction. It shook

him perilously with covert sob and laughter. This was the body of it :

“Fair sire, I would you were here. The villain you sent has laid Sir Aglovale low with a knife in his back so that he cannot speak. Howbeit, I do not think he will die thereof. Fair sire, he knows what is truth and so do I ; but others do not, though they make pretence, save Michael and John, who do not hide misdoubt. The villain has escaped. Fair sire, I would you were here to deal against misdoubt and pretence. Fair sire, I now do love Sir Aglovale as I love another, but not near so well. I, Mariet, am deeply distressed for you both.”

That letter brought Sir Hermind as soon as he could stand and go, for he had been sick of a fever at that time of wretched miscarriage, or doubtless he had not tarried so far from a sight of Mariet, and the kiss of peace when it was due. Sir Aglovale by then could also stand and go a little, and unadvisedly he came out and stood up for the rite of greeting ; for even as Sir Hermind embraced him, crying out on his unhappiness, the wound broke inwardly, and he answered, “ Ah, peace ! ” with a gush of blood.

Alas ! here for foul evidence was the accusation of blood ; all fair show was darkened by the stain of it. Sir Hermind himself was plainly troubled when he came to private speech.

Said Sir Aglovale, “ I need no telling to understand this mischief. I knew the hand against me was the hand of that savage handdog of mine who served me well to his cost. Almost I was sure by his shadow ; with your missive to boot I understood enough.”

“ So do not I. The knave was surly but trusty, as you said. This devilry of his is beyond me.”

Aglovale lay silent, biting a dreary smile, till Sir Hermind pressed him to be plain.

“ Sure, sir, the fact is plain : the man serves me with your favour,—pins it to my back on his knife. The dog has his humour.

“ Is that not plain enough ? You sent him to me,—him

that lent me steady faithful service on the warrant of my word to bear him through,—to me that failed him, and surrendered him, and stood by him only at his punishment for my transgressions, and my warrant worthless.”

“God ’a mercy, you paid him off handsomely.”

“I paid him for his skin. I did not dare offer to buy up his grievance, he a free Briton. Now I think that has been paid for.”

“By my head, this is bitter!”

“By your head, it was bitter! It is over.”

“Sir Aglovale, for the good of Galis I had to break you.”

“For the good of Galis I was broken. Also for the good of Galis cast me aside.”

“Fair cousin,” said Sir Hermind, sorrowfully, “I was so blank that I was come to ask you why your blood rose against me.”

Said Aglovale, wearily, “As to that, fair cousin, you pressed me too hard for my condition. For, to be plain, Sir Hermind, you do not love me; you never will. Nor do I you quite. You know me, you trust me, you worship me when you can, you break me when you must with a loth heart. I you no less. I have knocked you in my way, and you have knocked me in yours, but for all that no shade of rancour has ever come between us, nor ever will. Rancour, no! Love, no! But hard truth and honest understanding to rest upon I pray we keep always, and namely for the sake of Mariet.”

He was passing weak and low at the end of speech, and so Sir Hermind meditated all silent some while before he took up the word.

“For the sake of Mariet and for the sake of truth I pray you grant me one request.”

Said Aglovale, smiling, “Nay! Give me your bidding.”

“Let us go together before King Arthur.”

Aglovale lay staring with a fallen countenance. “Sir, on my own account I am bound to the court of King Arthur, so soon as I can ride. Sir, at your pleasure so be it. Yet to what purpose?”

Said Sir Hermind, "Look you, Sir Aglovale! you and I and Mariet are here so set in a coil of doubt and suspicion! It were well to lay the matter in the hands of our noble lord King Arthur, for his sanction and approval would justify us above suspicion, and stand us right before the world."

Aglovale lay mute, his visage was drawn and grey, and he took his breath so heavily that Hermind was in dread of blood anew.

Came voice at last, "King Arthur would not sanction and approve. His face is a very sword—ready as any knife to pin upon me your good worship in scorn and disgust. He would be justified—by right of overrule—to take away—Mariet—out of my hands."

Few and feeble were the words, but they told much to Sir Hermind: how dearly he prized Mariet. He in a heat cried, "By Heaven! but I will so sound your worship before King Arthur, that he must needs give ear and alter his countenance."

Said Aglovale, faintly, "It is no use—King Arthur would not give ear nor alter his countenance, though Percivale himself came from the dead to speak for me."

"From the dead!" breathed Hermind. "Dead—Sir Percivale dead!" There was no response. "God rest his soul," he prayed; and, awestruck, he gazed down upon Sir Aglovale, for he saw once more that afterglow lighten his countenance.

Prayed Aglovale, "God rest his soul. Ah God! Mariet! Look down, and overrule Thou us, for the making of Mariet!"

## CHAPTER XX

**W**ELL alone came Aglovale to Camelot, and all timely he came for hearing the last tidings of his brother.

For few days later Sir Bors returned from that far-off city of Sarras, where he had laid to earth the mortal covers of three pure souls: maiden Saint, Galahad, and Percivale. Beside the vacant sieges of his two fellows Bors took his place, and before Arthur and the broken fellowship told the tale of how the Quest was achieved, and many high adventures therewith—of the Table, and the Ship, and the Sword; of the passing of Percivale's sister Saint, and how dead she came in the body to keep tryst; how they rested in prison with marvellous consolation; how in the city of Sarras Galahad was crowned king, and how he died for holy joy.

Sir Launcelot bowed down, weeping for his son in sorrow and joy, and many another wept with him. Sir Aglovale neither bowed, nor wept, nor spoke. Once Sir Bors at the first looked upon him earnestly, meeting a passive stare. He came to the tale of how Sir Percivale took on religious clothing, and in a hermitage abode, praying and wasting away till he died upon Easter Day. Once again he looked on Sir Aglovale; even then he sat rigid and still as stone. Those who remembered to mark him were not drawn to approach in the kindness of common dole one so unmoved. Only Launcelot, and he was blinded. He came by, and turned to take Sir Aglovale by the hand.

“Ah, Sir Aglovale, we be fellows this day beyond the rest; for to you and to me most near as brother and son are these

two best knights in the world, Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale, fellows without peer."

Aglovale blessed him as the indigent blesses alms, and gripped so hard that Sir Launcelot took away bruised fingers.

Late that night came Sir Bors to Sir Aglovale's lodging.

"I pray you, Sir Aglovale, give me leave to be free of your privacy at this time, though I know you so little, but by hearsay."

"Make free. In the name of God, give me to hear what is mine, though it be but grief."

"Sir, I bring you your own again," said Bors, and put into his hands his own sword that Percivale had taken.

At that there was glow in ashes. Aglovale took the blade and handled it over and over, and kissed devoutly the red cross in the hilts. For this same blade tokened loss and gain: regained from Arthur, regained from Lamorak, regained from Percivale; thrice annealed, he held it dear.

Said Bors, "Hear how Sir Percivale delivered this charge. He kneeled, and lifting up the hilts between his two hands, he cried, 'I swear, brother Sir Aglovale, I swear I do love you.'"

Aglovale turned away abrupt with a heavy breath.

Said Bors, "Help me to speak lest I do wrong between you and Sir Percivale."

"That you cannot. You mean kindly. Tread on."

Bors could not. "Have patience," he said, "and first hear me out on a trouble of mine own."

He told the tale that my most dear Master has recorded, of the grief and offence that came between him and his brother Lionel as they went their ways on the Quest. For he abandoned his brother, him stripped naked, bound, barbarously used; and he left him to bodily death, and chose rather, for the worship of Jesu God and Saint Mary Mother, to go save a maid in desperate case, and so to deliver two unhappy souls from sin and shame that is deadlier than death. But by the mercy of God Sir Lionel did not die. Soon he met with him again. Alas! enraged he found him. No plea, no meekness availed.

His dear brother set upon him to slay him, and so fell was his mood that he slew without mercy a priest and a knight who came between for mediation. In the end, said Bors, the wrath of God smote them down at their strife; and when his dear brother came to himself in his arms he forgave him gently for all his deep offence.

Aglovale heard the tale quietly; he did not pronounce on it well or ill. Bors went on.

He left his brother, he said; for a voice bade him go seek Sir Percivale needing his fellowship on the deep. And so he did; and after a day and a night he came to the sea, where lay a ship all white under the moon. Straightway he entered, and right so the night darkened on a sudden, and the vessel, starting from land like a winged thing, took flight away. And there in the midst, sleeping, by morning light he found Sir Percivale according to the sending voices. So with joy and comfort of each other they sailed together the great seas, many days drifting and driving, yet unafraid.

At that time either told other how he had been tempted on the Quest. Sir Percivale told how a fiend had carried him and cast him down in a wilderness to hunger, and how he was tempted of the Master Fiend of Hell in a fair shape, and drank strong drink and turned to sin. But he sinned not indeed, for by God's grace he looked upon his sword with the holy sign upon it, and right so called upon God, whereat the Fiend fled away. Then Percivale caught his sword and drove it through his own flesh for penance; and thereafter spent and feeble he came into the ship that wafted him to their meeting.

Aglovale fingered the blade and the hilts with a grim smile, and Sir Bors eyed him doubtfully and went on.

He said that when he came to tell in turn his adventures past, how he had abandoned his brother and aggrieved him deadly, that Sir Percivale was moved to great distress with heavy weeping, and swooned for sorrow.

"So it was, Sir Aglovale," said Bors, "that Sir Percivale gave me to know more than a little.

"Yea, more than a little!" said Bors. "I know all. Oh, sir, I know all!"

Aglovale pressed down his head upon his hands. Hot and quivering he said, "Sure he must have loved you dearly."

"Aye, that he did!" said Bors. "Like a brother."

"Like a brother!" breathed Aglovale.

Cried Bors, distressed, "Not as he loved you, Sir Aglovale. You he loved above all the world—above measure—as father, brother, friend in one. He scarce could speak for weeping as he told how you did deserve his love, and how he failed you."

"Cease, cease!" groaned Aglovale.

"I will not. He said he forsook you unbrotherly; yet knew not at that time what he did. When he heard how before King and fellows you had cried out against his unkindness, then he did know."

"Mercy, leave this! I know better than you."

Cried Bors, "But I know,—I! For when I had forsaken my brother I fell to anguish of doubt that I was not justified. And I,—I had trusted him to know how hard I turned me from the call of natural affection. Yea, and I had doubted of him that he should grudge against God Who called me from him in his dire need."

Aglovale rocked and sighed, and Bors went on. He told of maiden Saint, how she brought Sir Galahad with her to sail with them the seas; and how she brought faith and comfort to Sir Percivale; for she, by her life and words, showed him how true to God our Maker can human affections be. So she taught and consoled him till the day of her death, when she gave up her sweet life most charitably for the healing of a vile creature.

"God rest her dear soul," said Aglovale. "She used to pray for me."

"Sir," cried Bors, "God only knows how constant were Sir Percivale's prayers for you. In sleep I have heard him often, in fever often. And hard he prayed, the prayer that God denied, to see you face to face but once before he departed this life."



Aglovale heard on in silence the meek and pitiful tale of Percivale's end. By slow degrees, he dwined and wasted after his sister's death, though for the months in prison and for Galahad's year of reign the presence of the Holy Grail sustained him. He had little strength in him left when Galahad's soul departed, caught up into heaven with the Holy Grail. Thereafter meekly he dressed his heart to death. Yea, it was pitiful. Sound and fit in spirit, he was too weak in body to seek after his brother, him bitter and broken to despair, crying out on him, "He left me unkindly."

For a year he lingered alive in sorrow and prayer, and sorrowing he died. He passed away with the cry, "Aglovale, Aglovale." From sleep Bors heard it, and sprang. Dead he lay, his arms wide spread, tears upon his visage.

Aglovale shrank and covered his ears to shut out the profanation of speech upon his heart's privacy. When he lifted his head Bors, still and mute, was regarding him with eyes brimful of distress. He started up and stood away.

Said Bors, "Sir, an you shut your ears against me I have done. I pray God move your heart somehow yet, though human means fail."

Aglovale wrung open his heart. "Help me, Sir Bors! You shall know, because you loved him."

"In the name of God!" said Bors.

Said Aglovale, "When Percivale called, I heard. I saw. Weeping, he looked on me face to face. His arms were open wide. I knew when he died."

"You heard his call! You saw him so as he died!"

"He never knew me; albeit we were at one. He died and never knew we were at one."

"You were at one!"

"Yea, yea! He passed me upon empty night. Before I could reach him by word or touch he was gone from me uncomfortable. God rest his soul!"

"Ah, sir, lead, for this light blinds me."

"The fault was mine. Would to God I had trusted him

fully and deserved full trust. He died, and never knew I understood and approved."

"You understood and approved! You who cried out on his unkindness!"

"Yea, so! Unkind, unkind! Ah, God, unkind he was, and had to be. And I cried: yea, I thought blame that he forsook me. Sir, I have learned better. I was out, and he was true: yea, very faithful in his unkindness. Alas! for Percivale! Gone—gone! He prayed for me constantly! and I, ah God, despaired! God rest him. Jesu God comfort him. I would have given this dear world away but once to hold his hand, and look him in the eyes, and say well done. He passed me upon empty night. Gone, gone for ever."

"Not so," said Bors. "He has gone from this life: God has taken him from his pains. Pray we He may reveal all for his joy, and bring us in His presence to meet hereafter."

Aglovale stared silent. "God keep him to peace," he said at last.

After awhile Bors spoke. "Sir, I speak abashed, yet for the love of Sir Percivale give me to know more. How came you, who cried against him, by such true and perfect understanding? for ye were far apart and without tidings."

"I—I," stammered Aglovale, "reached after him—in vain; but at last I—I met him."

"Sir, how can that be? Sir, I have no right to ask, but by the common love we bear Sir Percivale let me understand."

"Make you free. I, too, was on the Quest of the Grail, and on the Quest of Percivale, as both were one. It came to pass that God Almighty required me to forego natural affection, the call of blood, honour to father and brethren dead, and to follow only our fair Lord Jesu. And so I did. And when I had done so and was come to myself, lo! Percivale shone clear to my heart, and I understood. We were close. I knew it then."

"Alas! he never knew. The last he knew of you was that time of the Holy Visitation, when secretly you came and went again, avoiding him."

"No, no," said Aglovale. "That I never did!"

"How so? He sought you, and you would not be found."

"I—I was not there—not in the body."

He smote down his face upon his hands loth to unclose; but a true and single-hearted man was against him, constrained him, and so he told all.

They came upon high and intimate speech as to the Holy Quest and the significance of it; and Bors was amazed at the reach and insight he met. Himself who had attained had but little to teach Sir Aglovale, who in darkness had come to discern how the outward vision of the Mystery was but a shadow of the inward.

"I have learned hard," said Aglovale.

Said honest Bors, "Sir, now is there no room left me to wonder how such a flower of knighthood as Sir Percivale came from the keep of such a man as you."

At that Aglovale glowed red, for dearer praise could not touch him. Bors saw his colour different.

"Ah, pardon!" he cried. "Take me as I mean: I would that such a man as you were more rightly esteemed among us all."

"Most men," said Sir Aglovale, "I do think, are esteemed better than they deserve. I no worse at all. For God's sake let me lie!"



## CHAPTER XXI

THESE records of the life of Aglovale are here unhappily poor and incomplete. Some details remain in fragments past piecing, and some remain to be gathered up to place in the records of other lives. So to let lie or to lay over must be the telling of how Sir Lamiel stole Mariet away and delivered him to Arthur, and how the child with his simple guile won back to Sir Aglovale. Also telling of John the bastard; how he was set against Sir Aglovale, but turned again to worship him before departing from him on a scruple of pride. Also telling of Sir Lamiel's daughter Bonamy; how she played her father false, and he smote her, and thereafter knew her to be verily his own child. Also how Bonamy with her stringent charm in unloveliness was beloved of Michael and John, and herself loved neither, and of the virgin huntress life she led with her two loyal lovers. As to the tale of the empoisoned apples that the Queen of the Waste Lands purveyed, there is little cause to add more than may be read in the books of my most dear Master. Other fragments await the tale of King Bagdemagus' daughter; how her brother Meliagraunce came to a bad end, how Sir Aglovale faced King Arthur for leave to bury his old friend, and how above his tomb, he met King Bagdemagus' daughter, and she knew him, naming him again Misericors, and blessing him.

These present records carry on the tale after that burial, when Aglovale departed from Westminster and rode north for the distant earldom of his brother Tor, whom he sought at that time with a certain purpose in mind ripe for unfolding.

Down a moorland road came an old woman on horseback, led at a gentle pace by a young man afoot. She rode astride, upright as a larch, her full skirts dressing her well in the saddle. Milk-white locks lay under cap and hat, red engrain freshened withered cheeks, and eyes noticeably blue looked at Sir Aglovale attentively as she passed. He spoke hail on her fair winter day, and she uttered blessing in return, right fair and womanly.

A mile further on came down a great herd of kine swinging slow. Again, a mile further a ruck of bullocks drove by, wild and jostling; and then, brought along in solitary state, came a mighty bull, his hoofs splaying under his weight, surly-eyed, his head held low with ring and staff by sturdy men. Goats followed and some sheep, and then more kine, and so on for more miles. For this was the season for shifting herds to their winter quarters, and voiding the upland farms.

A good seven miles above the dale homestead Sir Aglovale came past the moorland farm. Voices from within the yard reached him: a man said, remonstrant, "Now, Laykin, Laykin!" and a girl cried, "Uncle, uncle!" imploring. Then at the open gateway he had sight of two men, two women, and a young maid, whose hand was on the neck of a dun heifer. She was praying for its life. Came answer: "But, Laykin, the poor beast is past mending." She did but plead the faster. Sir Aglovale paused for a second look, and knew it must be in vain.

The maiden was a wonder in that rude place. She was, maybe, but fifteen, but tall and full-breasted as a woman; her head was finely set, her hair very beautiful, fair and abundant; colour, skin, grace, and mien all marked her from the homely churls about her.

Before Sir Aglovale moved on, one spoke behind him.

"Serve you, sir?"

He beheld two men, who stood and fronted him respectfully. By their square build and their honest, bearded faces he knew them for two who had passed him leading the bull. Though that was miles further back, here they were now at his

heels. Then those within the yard were aware of him, and the men there came forward promptly and stood at the gateway, while the two women went and spoke to the maiden, and drew up her hood over her hair. She looked up once, her eyes brimful of distress, and then bent fondling to the dun heifer.

The men saluted meetly and waited with deference to know his pleasure, but it was plain enough they were sturdy and wary keepers, who were very suspicious. And for cause: she was a passing fair maid! Sir Aglovale put them from doubt lightly, asking his line across the moor.

"Sir," said one, readily, "I will set you in the way. Be you pleased to follow."

He led at a round pace, and before long bettered it and ran; for, said he, brisk going was needful were that moor to be passed before nightfall. From high ground he pointed the way: so far till you came past a hut on the right by seven springs; and so on by the water-run.

"My father you may meet yonder. He is out with lads after hares. Sir, should mists come on, better bid one of them to be your guide."

The honest churl turned home again, but Sir Aglovale was well aware he would be watching with a jealous eye to see the way he took. And, truly, she was a passing fair maid.

In his mind he looked again upon that scene, for a picture of woe it was that was in a manner pleasing: maid and beast, fellow-creatures in distress; she weeping, cheek and hands against the sleek hide; the dumb beast with large gentle eyes, muzzling to her and moaning for its hurt. And there was no remedy but slaughter. But she: "No, no, good uncle. Oh, cruel! Gramfer could mend this; I know he could. Ask Gramfer!" Her speech was pure and clear, not like theirs. Her dress was finer stuff, fresher, trimmer, though it was but a simple bodice and kirtle of woad blue linen, and a cloak and hood of grey frieze. The clasp was silver; her shoes, laced high, were of dressed leather. Those uncles cherished her well,

though with simple cunning that was rather foolishness. Surely some strain of noble blood had been grafted upon churl stock. She passed out of mind.

Two nimble lads went by with white-bellied hares slung upon staves; and in due course Sir Aglovale came by the hut, where a hale old man, gnarled and weather-beaten, stood by the door with a couple of fair grey hounds; and he pointed the way afresh. Sir Aglovale looked at the hounds attentively, and praised them.

"Aye, rare hounds they be. Sure, sir, you never saw the like."

"Not so sure, good-man. I have hounds of that breed, and so had my father before me."

The old man looked hard into the distance. "Ah," he said, "there be dog-stealers! One I know was a knight, saving your presence."

Said Sir Aglovale, "You I wot have bred rarely, an all so many sturdy drovers of a like make be sons of yours, and namely an a maid I have seen be your grandchild."

The old man cocked an eye at him and pursed up his mouth. Then, with sudden force, he said, "No, that she is not! For there be ravishers. One I know was a knight, saving your presence."

"So, so!" said Sir Aglovale. "Some sons of yours were, forsooth, passing saving of my presence!"

Said the old man then: "Well, well, the best and truest man I know is a knight; and I say it who have twelve sons of my own as good and true as they can stand."

Then he brisked, and said: "Sir, you had best be stirring, for I smell mist. I had thought to night it out here, and course at dawn; but my bones can't abide mist, so I go for home." He chirruped his hounds and went.

He said sooth. Before long the mists came down and hid the moor, and Sir Aglovale rode through a white blind. The whiteness grew grey and then black, and the damp struck very chill with the night. He went afoot to warm his blood, and tramped hour after hour till the blackness turned to grey and

to white again, and he guessed that the moon was up. So weary was he that any hollow would have been shelter good enough for him, but on the bare upland there was none.

Again he mounted, for he found he was treading an uncertain track, and could trust his horse to follow it better than himself. And so at last his wise beast stopped beside a dark shade of mist; and lighting down he felt walls and a door, knocked and had no answer, broke open the door and entered. And then he was well-nigh sure he had traversed a great round, and was come again to the hut he had passed. He felt all about: the place was bare; charred turf was on the hearth, but not a spark; a standing crib by the wall was bedded with heather, bunched upright, springy and fragrant, and a sheepskin hung on a nail. So he was thankful, set his spear by the door, led in his horse, unsaddled and took off the beast's harness, then his own, lay down and slept.

He woke again at a sound: one beat at the door and shook it. Came a voice: "Gramfer, Gramfer, oh let me in! let me in, or I shall die!" With that the door gave in.

Cried Aglovale: "Who comes?" But he knew by the pure clear tone it was Laykin, the fair maid.

At his voice she caught her breath with a gasp of terror, and before he could reach the door she was off scurry-footed into the night. Out he strode and stood to listen. A half-uttered cry reached him, and the souse of a body into water; and lightly he went forward, and found her lying in the water-run, stunned or swooning.

He lifted her and carried her up to the hut. She was drenched with mist and stream, and very cold. As quickly as he could in the dark he loosed and stripped off her wet clothing, cloak and hood, bodice, kirtle, and smock, and laid her naked in the warmed crib, and the warmed fleece over her. He took off his own coat, leather, well lined and wadded, and added that for her comfort. He broke the shoe-thongs, unshod ice-cold feet, and sat down to chafe them strongly with his hands. Then he thought heavily, for he knew quite



well how maidens take their terrors, and he doubted how to deal, and he dreaded the trial.

She moaned a little as she came to herself. Poor maid! her terrors took her hard. A strange man held her by the feet; a beast was snuffing and shifting close; she breathed a heavy aroma—horse, peat, heather, and the man's leather coat blent their odours. And she lay stripped: even in the dark the sense of nakedness was sharp and bitter. Suddenly she tried to pluck away her feet, but they were held fast, and at that she uttered a woeful sound, weak and pitiful, as the cry of a trapped rabbit, and fell to shuddering.

"Peace, peace," said Aglovale, "you shall have no harm."

He laid her feet between his knees, and chafed on steadily from knee to ankle as he would soothe a frightened horse. She whispered prayers while her teeth chattered.

"Mother Mary, pity! Ah, dear God, pity! Look down and save me."

Aglovale said, "Amen."

She moaned, "Let me go! let me go!" and writhed and beat vainly, and sank again, shuddering.

Said Aglovale: "Fair maid, I think you to be Laykin of the farm?"

"Yes," she said faintly. "But who are you?"

Now Aglovale had no mind to tell her his name, for it might happen to sound little assurance to a maid.

"I am a knight of Galis," he said, "and I serve God and King Arthur as truly as I can."

It was pitiful then to hear her entreat him by his knighthood to do her no wrong.

"Marry! fair Laykin, but hold your peace and lie still. I promise you by my knighthood, so help me God! to take you home to-morn good a maid as your mother bore you."

"Ah! sir, why do you hold my feet and force me against my will? Why have you taken my clothes and put me to shame?" She broke into tears and sobbed in terror and distress.

Aglovale put down her feet and stood up, grieved and troubled ; for a many foul wrong on his conscience told him he deserved her mistrust, and as he was a sinful man he remembered pleasures. Would to God he did not ! He took up her wet clothes, opened the door, and, standing outside, wrung them out one by one ; and he put them to drain, some on a nail, and some he laid over the door's edge.

Dry fleece brushed him. He caught at it, and as she slid past and left it in his hand he caught her by the hair. She cried out for pain, for his handling was not gentle then ; he gripped her fast and swung her from her feet ; her lithe body was hard to hold, and she strove with him. He set to the door and bore her back to the crib.

"For God's sake, maiden," he said fiercely, "spare me as you would be spared. You will make me my truth overhard to keep."

She dropped still and inert as he put her down on the heather, for she had swooned again. Thick moisture was on his hand ; he tasted and found it was blood.

Then Aglovale knew not what to do. As he caught her by the door, short he trowed that he must go out into the night and leave her to shake alone. His clothes he could leave her, and his horse, whose great furnace of a body shed warmth. The short close had stirred him ; there was very danger he knew. But she was bleeding, swooning, a forlorn and frightened child, and he deemed it would be unworthy to avoid and leave her out of dread. He kneeled down and prayed hard till she stirred.

"Poor maid, you are hurt ?"

"My head, my head," she moaned. "No, no, never touch me. It is nothing, but it hurts. Oh, my head !"

She was weeping and shaking like ague with cold and fear just as before.

"Laykin, child, listen ! I have prayed and promised to use you as I would, put case I had a daughter here in this plight. God has set us here doubtless for our good. Pray you to mighty God for me that I father you well in thought and deed."

She lay quiet, weeping softly. "Oh, my father! oh, my own father!"

"Child," said Aglovale, "my body is warm and yours is very cold. Cover in and lie close to me and get warmth."

He lay down by her side.

The touch of him blotted out every word he had used. She was up again, desperate in her terrors.

"This shall end!" said Aglovale. "There is but one remedy. God can keep me my will true though the Devil burn my body."

He drew her down, roughly covered her, and held her helpless from head to foot with more force than enough. She shrieked only once; she made but one frenzied effort, then she lay panting, lax and spent. The man against her lay as quiet as in sleep. So they rested together awhile without stir or speech.

Came a sigh from Laykin, and she quavered meek, "Sir, you are so heavy."

Aglovale shifted a little, hopped her about well with coat and fleece, and said gently, with a broken voice, "Praise God and go to sleep. We are safe enough."

He felt her grow warm by degrees, her breathing became soft and regular, and at last she slept like a child in his arms. Half asleep she turned and nestled against him.

Aglovale in his heart laughed for joy. He felt no trouble at all. He had lain down with her ready to endure a night of fires, and, lo! peace and exultation came. All night he lay awake and enjoyed sinless, soft and warm and fragrant, though she lay against him. With the creep of dawn he too slept.

## CHAPTER XXII

**W**ITH the dawn came a breeze that swept up the mist, and the sun got play. Thirteen weary men were glad of the day; some ranged the upland, and some the slopes between the farm and the lower homestead. At the parting of the mist one spied a point of light; it was the tip of a spear reared upright against the hut. At the lintel was a narrow flutter of white. He cried a signal that was passed along, and ran; and as he ran he began to curse deep, for he could see that the white was a woman's smock. He came near and peered through the chink, and he saw what he thought he should see. Others were in sight running, so he drew away and waited.

Sir Aglovale awoke suddenly, alive to day and danger; and the maid Laykin woke as he rose and softly covered her. And as she remembered, and saw the strange man who had lain with her, and felt the light of day upon her, and his eye, she crimsoned and hid her face.

Aglovale went to the door and looked out. Hastily he took down her clothes and laid them beside her.

"Don, up quickly, and shut your ears against ugly words, for there are some without who will give me a heat for your sake."

He took his sword, and as he was, unarmed and coatless, stepped out and shut the door.

Four men stood speaking together at a little distance; and afar off two more were coming, and behind these yet another, slower-footed. The four came at him straight, armed with the

long staves that moorsmen use over the moss. Sir Aglovale put the point of his sword to ground, and lifted his hand. They were not to be stayed so; but he had no mind to kill. He did but jerk up his sword and shorten two staves at a stroke; a third he avoided and caught in his hand, but the fourth got home and knocked him flatlings.

They pinned him down and wrested away his sword. Then they set upon him in plain speech.

"God 'a mercy, men!" said Sir Aglovale; "let me up now you have won me. You say wrong. I have ravished no maid this night."

At that one fetched him a blow that took his breath.

"Vile knight, do you say you found her no maid?"

Said another, "So sure as she is no maid you shall be no man."

Said Sir Aglovale, faintly, "Sooth, men, your maid is a maid yet for aught I have done with her."

Came answer, "Liar! for with my two eyes I saw you together."

"Beshrew your two eyes! They gave you false reading."

"The maid shall say. Laykin, Laykin!"

They set Sir Aglovale on his feet when they had bound his hands; and one went to the door and cooed some grieved words to their poor dove. Then Laykin came out.

The men cursed again, for she was pitiful to see. Her clothes, all damp, clung to her; she was very pale; there was blood on her hair, and, as she put up her hand to her head, her arm showed bruises. Scared and bewildered she looked at the knight and her four kinsmen, and then her blood rushed high and she covered her face with both hands.

"Laykin, what has this knight done to you? Has he shamed you anyway?"

She could scarcely be heard behind her hands, but she answered, "Yes."

"Has he lain with you and forced you?"

Again she said, "Yes."

"Maiden," cried Sir Aglovale, amazed, "you will kill me!"

He took a step towards her, but they forced him back. "Child," he said, "this is lying more perilous than that we had in the dark. Ah! child, is it as innocent?"

She put down her hands, and looked at him with troubled eyes.

"Good uncles, I have something to say to this knight. Stand away, good uncles, and let us speak alone together."

"Laykin, no!"

"I must! I must speak to him, and alone."

"Laykin, no. You shall not speak save in your father's presence."

Tears came. "Oh, my father, my father! would he were come."

"He will come soon enough, and he will work this. Go in, Laykin, you have said enough."

And then as two more came up, Laykin, weeping, went hastily from fresh eyes and the hearing of shame told.

In vain Sir Aglovale spoke; they cursed the truth to scorn. Last came the old man, and he took order of the matter more soberly than his sons.

"Poor maid! poor maid!" he muttered, with his eyes screwed hard into distance.

"Sons," he said, "this is less my business than yours, and less yours than your brother's. He will be come anon. As the man is a knight he may deal with him not as you would. Bring him along. I will mount Laykin and bring her after."

"Good-man," said Sir Aglovale, "as I am a knight I would gladly meet one of my degree to answer with my body, knightly, that the maid is as she should be, for that this night throughout I held her virgin, and right so would uphold her virgin name and fame."

The old man turned in a sudden fury. "One of you fetch me out one of his knightly spurs to cram in his knightly throat if he offer more knightly prate. Yea, ravisher, truly you shall answer with your body, but whether as a man or a knight is not yours to choose; that rests with my sons, or their brother. Take him away!"

He made for the door, but halted to say, "What is his name? Hey? Not asked? Sir Ravisher, will you to be known to us by any other name?"

"I take no keep, but ye may know my name is Sir Aglovale de Galis."

The old man sucked in a long breath with a whistle of dismay. Dismay was on the faces of his sons; they stood without stir or speech, and looked agape on each other and the knight. Step by step the old man came back to look him close in the face.

"Sir Aglovale de Galis!" he said at hush; "King Pellinore's son! By Gum! here is a hot brew. Sons, take him away."

He stood fixed and staring till they were gone.

Now Sir Aglovale took himself heavily. By the looks and silence of these churls he deemed that the blame of evil living still rested on his name. His day-spring was overcast; he sank from the lift that had made light of misadventure and miscarriage. And the blow dealt him had done bodily mischief. The churls were nimble moorsmen, and they took him at a rapid pace that tried him hard. The two that led him did not speak at all. Others fell in with them as the miles passed; and these, hearing his name and his guilt, stood with dismayed faces as he was taken past, and they spoke little and low as they came along with those behind. There were twelve brothers in all.

The blithe note of a hunter's horn rang faintly up. "Ah! he has come," said one, and after that they tramped all in dead silence. At a turn of the road the homestead was in sight; and there, on the green, stood a noble horse, and greyhounds were leaping at play. But nearer, close at hand from the rickyard, one unseen was shouting the herdman's call:

"Coo-wup, coo-wup, coo-wup! brothers, brothers, brothers! Where is my little white heifer?"

Aglovale should know that voice. His brother, Sir Tor, swung out into the road and stood before him.

"Brothers!" said Sir Tor, and stopped dead.

And Sir Aglovale stopped dead.

"Men!" cried Tor, high, "it is my brother, Sir Aglovale!"

He took a step, and stopped dead again, for he was smitten with dread at the eyes of twelve brothers; and Sir Aglovale was changing colour red and white.

"We know that, lord brother. Sir Tor, he has done you villainy. Your white heifer has been covered by that black bull."

"That is false," said Aglovale.

Tor set his eyes upon him, and regarded none other. Aglovale came up to him close, looked him in the eyes, and made sure of him. Then he smiled, and Tor heaved a great breath.

"Men," he said, "that is false."

He took Sir Aglovale by the neck and kissed him; and he cut him free. But as soon as he looked on his other brothers, the grim pity of their stubborn faces daunted him.

"Where is my little maid?"

"Alas! poor maid, she has come to grief: she is no maid now. That false brother of yours has taken her maidenhood."

Again Tor turned to regard Sir Aglovale.

"Not so; she has her maidenhood unharmed. I knew not whose daughter she was; but I took and kept her as a clean virgin, and clean she is."

"Brothers," said Tor, "I know you say wrong."

"Hear an eye-witness, lord brother. I saw. He lay with your daughter. He had her stripped even of her smock. I saw her so in his arms."

Tor wheeled, white and staring. "Mercy, Aglovale! answer quick!"

"Never fear, Sir Tor, though he says but what he saw. I lay with her, as you might have lain with her, for her comfort and warmth."

"Stripped, Sir Aglovale?"

"Yea, so. I found her drenched and cold and swooning. To the dark I unclothed her, and with my own coat wrapped her."



Said Tor, "Swear you to this? Swear this is all the truth and no worse."

"Before God, it is all the truth as it stands for Doomsday. I have not trespassed in thought or deed."

"Mercy, Sir Aglovale," said Tor, with a sob; "I would scarce believe this on the word of any knight alive but you. Ye brothers good and true, look you! Sir Aglovale is beyond you my best and truest brother. I take his word and believe him."

"Your own eyes you must believe, Sir Tor, when you have seen your daughter, as some of us have seen her. She is bruised; she is torn; she weeps."

"God in heaven!" cried Tor, in an agony.

Aglovale put a hand on him to steady him. "Ah, Tor, you cry out causeless. As you love me, get rid of these churls awhile, and take comfort."

Tor struck away his hand. "These churls are my brothers, Sir Aglovale, just as near to me as you are." He stared now with dangerous eyes, and his voice went high and small. "And none of these have ever ravished."

It was grievous. Then said Aglovale, short and hard, "That I could tell of them that looked on your daughter. They, for sure, never were acquainted with the mien of a spoiled maid, her eyes, her voice. God grant you have better discernment."

"Pardon me, Sir Aglovale," said Tor, with tears; "and ye all! take back your words and be sorry for your error. This is a knight who in right and in wrong utters truth; and well he deserves that his plain word should be taken against any man's oath."

"We be churls, lord brother, and sons of Aries le Vaysher; and he is a knight, and son of King Pellinore. But we be honest men, begotten of an honest man; and he is a ravisher, begotten of a ravisher."

"Cease! say not so to me, King Pellinore's son."

"We say so as we are your mother's sons. And our Laykin has mother's blood, and is ours as well as yours."

And now she is as our mother was when your father had done with her, and your father's son has been the doer."

"Oh, churls," cried Tor, "where is my dear daughter? I will see her and know for myself. Cease, Sir Aglovale! Cease all, lest I go mad!"

Said Aglovale, "God give you wisdom and patience when you do see her. For alas! Tor, I ruffled your poor bird in the dark, and I doubt you will not find her smooth."

Tor turned desperate. "What is this? How do you mean? Speak! For God's sake, Sir Aglovale, put me out of this misery. Oh, quick! pierce me in and out. Give no denial, you have touched too far for cure. Only put me past this misery. How shall I not find her smooth?"

"I was rough. She speaks me amiss."

"Aye, Sir Tor, she speaks. We churl men go for naught, but you will hear your own daughter, and what she says is not smooth to hear."

"Is this your meaning, Sir Aglovale?"

Hopeless to spare his brother, Aglovale said, "Yes." Nothing he could say would profit at this pass.

"Go on, brothers; what has she said?"

"As we told you, that he has lain with her and forced her."

"Is this what she says, Sir Aglovale?"

"Yes," said Aglovale, again.

The churl brothers beheld in wonder the two unhappy men, for they suffered in fortitude and silence, and no words of protest or rebuke passed between them. Sir Tor was as still as stone. Sir Aglovale swayed and breathed hard. Neither looked at the other, for each had a double load of grief as much as he could bear. Long minutes wrung by before Sir Tor spoke.

"Where is my dear?" he said, and took a step.

Already some were aware of the sound of hoofs approaching, that Sir Aglovale did not hear as his heart was all on his brother. There was weeping among the churls, for they had to mind that they who were charged to keep the maid had

failed. Yet gentle Sir Tor forbore harsh language. He spoke to Sir Aglovale, but did not look at him.

"I do not think to kill you, Sir Aglovale, even for this. Go, live, for you are my father's son."

Out spoke the churls fierce and eager, "No, Sir Tor, you need not kill him. Leave him to us, and we will deal with him as he deserves."

Sir Tor turned. "Leave Sir Aglovale to himself. He needs no juster judge and no harder."

Round the bend came Aries le Vaysher, with Laykin mounted on the knight's horse; and Aglovale, right glad, took breath seeing his time was come to speak.

"Fair dear brother," he said, "now take your misery with both hands, and turn it inside out, for it is folly and untruth. Let your churl brothers kill me shamefully if this niece of theirs and mine prove no maid. Look at me, Tor! Could I look you in the face had I done the deed you think and found her to be your daughter? Oh, fair fool brother, I would rather go quick to hide in Hell."

Tor wavered at the force of his words, and, looking at him, tears of hope sprang to his eyes. Laykin slipped down and came running, for she saw her father; and then stopped short, for she saw Sir Aglovale.

Cried Tor, "Colombe, my dove, my dear!"

Straight to his arms she sped, and he held her close and kissed her.

Aries le Vaysher came and stood. He was mum and hard, and plainly would not serve for any better information. Sir Aglovale was troubled, seeing the tight-shut mouth and hostile eyes screwed against him. He had thought that the old man might come to lift the sky with a word; for surely, alone with the maid, one of authority and old and shrewd would lightly have learned the truth.

Then Sir Tor put back his daughter and surveyed her, and his hope was well-nigh daunted to death when he saw the marks of violence upon her, and the blemish of distress on her fair face, and the painful colour that rose under his eye.

"Colombe, dear daughter, what is the truth? What has this knight done?"

She whispered, low, "He has shamed me," and fell a-weeping.

"Ah, child, be plain. Speak in as plain words as you can."

She whispered louder, "He has lain with me and forced me." And then she quavered, "Oh, take me away! Here are all so many."

Still Sir Tor held her off, and regarded her with pressing doubt not extinguished by her words; for had she indeed the eyes and the voice of a maid ravished? His brother had spoken shrewdly. Tor looked to him again desperately.

Said Aglovale, "Bid her face me."

"So do, daughter: face this knight."

She obeyed, and turned a face dyed with blushes, and lifted troubled eyes.

"God bless the maid!" said Aglovale, "she speaks as a maid who knows no worse what to speak. She should go to her mother."

She said, "Ah, fair father, let me speak with the knight alone."

"Child, as you love me, speak out bravely here and now in my presence."

She shrank and said, "No, no."

Said Aglovale, grim, "I tell you that, saving your father's presence and better right, I would be dealing as forcibly for good with your maiden understanding as I did with your maiden body."

She took shelter in her father's arms.

"Oh, cease!" said Tor. "She shall not suffer rude language. She shall go to my mother."

"Give me leave for a moment more," said Aglovale; "and I promise to go gently."

"Remember, child, how I promised to deal with you as a daughter. Know that in every truth you are but one degree less near to me than a daughter, for I am your father's brother, Sir Aglovale de Galis."

She said, "My uncle!" and fronted him with wide eyes.

Said Aglovale, "Now, child, look at your father and listen well, and answer me once. When I made you lie with me against your will, and had you in my arms, in what particular did I not father you as truly as your own father, Sir Tor?"

Obediently Colombe listened, with face upturned to her father.

She answered timidly, "Namely, sir, but in one particular: put case you had been my own father, truly you would have kissed your daughter."

Aries le Vaysher was the first to laugh. Tor laughed and wept together as he held her fast.

"O foolish little simpleton, to ado about nothing!"

The twelve brothers fell to laughter. Sir Aglovale was smiling; and said he, "I will make amends, Laykin Colombe, if it please you."

It did not please her; she shrank from him. The rude laughter of the men brought out fresh blushes and tears.

Said Tor, "Lightly, daughter, go speak alone with Sir Aglovale."

"No, no," she said in dismay; "not now."

"How now, silly bird!"

In strange confusion she stood, and her face grew burning red.

"Oh, I cannot: I did not know him for my uncle. Oh, mercy! Let me from such shame and sin."

"Where are we now?" cried Aglovale. "Sir Tor, speak you alone with her."

"No, no," she said again, "for ye are brothers."

"Marry! how these maids do try us men. So, ye men, guess what ado I had to deal with her gently in the dark."

That rude laughter of the men had brought out another. Beyond the rickyard gate stood the old mother, shading her eyes to look.

"O Grammer!" cried Colombe.

"In good time!" said Sir Tor. "Begone, O ruffled dove, and get from her a little wisdom."

She went like a bird to its nest.

But soon as she was gone those two strong brothers came to themselves and each other, shaken and weak from the strain that had tried them so, almost past bearing. Sir Tor kneeled down before his brother, and scarcely could he speak.

He said brokenly, "God reward you and bless you for that you have done and suffered by me and mine."

With one accord the churl brothers kneeled also. "God love you, sir, and forgive us our bloody words."

Sir Aglovale kneeled down also, and worshipped devoutly in his heart; and he uttered aloud praise and thankings to God Almighty who had fathered them all in the dark.

But Aries le Vaysher did not kneel. He looked on with tight mouth and hard screwed eyes; and as soon as they rose up, said he, deliberately: "I knew sure enough all along that she was well a maid."

He hugged himself and chuckled. "How? From Laykin over and over. But from her very first words I knew."

Sir Aglovale muttered, "Here is not such a genuine blind fool as I deemed, but a cruel knave."

Aries went on, "First thing says Laykin, she would not have minded so much, says Laykin, had it been her old Gramfer's doing."

He chuckled wickedly, and his sons were tickled to loud laughter again.

"Eh, sons! I might have whistled you back: but not I."

"Sonties!" said the sons, "but that was unkindness."

"Eh, sons!" he said, slow and hard. "But I choose to leave the son of his father to stew."

He eyed Sir Aglovale with surly satisfaction, unmoved by the stir among his sons. They blew against him for their part, and for Sir Tor's.

Said Aries, "As for Sir Tor, he is no son of mine; so, says I, the pair of them might sweat it out together. As for you, sons, a set of blind fools you were, and now you know."

"Look you, father, had we killed the knight amongst us

you would have been damned for the deed, and Sir Tor presently after would have been ready to kill you also."

"No, no," said the old man. "It was not killing you meant, sons. And I know Sir Tor better than that: he would not think to slay his brother. No, nor would he lay hands upon one who had fathered him well for eighteen years, when he was a very undutiful son."

"We be sons to a hoary head of disgrace to us all. God defend that we sons pay for this devilling of our father!"

The old man regarded the two brothers of noble blood. Their strong content with each other stood them above petty resentment.

"Eh, sons, these be two king's sons, who have paid smart for their father and his trespassing in my field. If they grudge at the price, I will pay them back well on their father's name all that is due."

Said Sir Tor, "Father Vaysher, you are a poorer man than I knew, and I grudge not your price."

Said Sir Aglovale, "By my father's soul, had I to pay dearer for that trespass of his, I would gladly, for the sake of this brother of mine who was then begotten."

Aries stood blinking and rubbing his chin, and took no heed to his sons who opened mouth again. Then said he in a sort of fury: "By Gum! King Pellinore by right and by wrong has begot rare good sons." He added soberly, "God rest his soul, and give him joy of his son Sir Aglovale de Galis, for that he is passing good, gentle, and honest, by proof on a fair young maid and a foul old churl. And he King Pellinore's son!"

"God keep him to peace!" muttered Aglovale.

"By your leave, Father Vaysher," said Sir Tor, smiling, "I would show this rare man to my mother."

"By your leave, lord son," said Aries, sharply, "I would show this rare man to my wife." He turned about. "Here, my lord Sir Aglovale, is your coat, and there is my house. Use the one as freely as you do the other."

"Gramercy!" said Sir Aglovale. "Sooth, I am starving outside and in."

At that Aries trudged ahead briskly, and then Sir Tor said softly, "Truly he loved me better than any of his own sons ; and he took it sore knowing that I was not his, and grudged me to my father. He is a good man ; he never miscalled my mother."



## CHAPTER XXIII

**A**RIES LE VAYSHER stood at his own door-cheek with oaten cakes and mead. He offered a cake with due ceremony, kneeling to one knee, and Sir Aglovale took and broke it with him and ate. And so came all the others; each in turn came and set his knee against Sir Aglovale's foot, and offered him his cake to break and eat. Orderly the same Aries offered the bowl, and Sir Aglovale took and drank; and after him drank all the rest, each upon his knee, Sir Aglovale standing among them as a King's son and a Queen's son.

"Now sons begone and get to work," said Aries; and to Sir Aglovale he said, "Now put your hand upon me, my lord, and upon your brother, and come in."

So, with a hand upon the shoulder of each, he was brought within, up to the hearth and the old wife's nook.

"Good-wife," said Aries, "stand up and make your reverence, for here I bring you one that is a King's son and a Queen's son, Sir Aglovale de Galis, who is as good and true a make of man as your son Sir Tor."

He put the knight's hand upon her, wheeled about, and went.

Tor's mother drew his hand down to her bosom, and over it folded her two withered hands, all shaking. "May God bless you, sir," she quavered at hush. "God bless Sir Aglovale de Galis. God bless my son's good brother. God bless King Pellinore's son." Her kind old eyes were steady and serene as she looked him hard in the visage, though she was greatly moved.

Tor brought her to her nook, and settled her against her

will ; for said she, "Son Tor, your brother is a Queen's son, and your mother is a poor churl's wife."

Said Aglovale, kneeling beside her, "Good mother, my father's Queen took your son to her heart." And at that the fair old woman forgot herself, and embraced him like a son, calling him so. And like a mother with a son confiding at her knee, she, whom his father had spoiled in her may-day, heard him tell over all he had done in the night with Laykin Colombe. She marvelled greatly, with no words to give but a simple refrain, "Eh, well to be sure!" Once she said, "Ah, sir, you have your father's eyes. Eh, well to be sure, God rest his soul!" and flushed delicately.

Her son Tor sat at her feet, very still, listening ; and when all was told he said, "Where is this poor little maid of mine?"

The old mother rose up. "She flew off as you came in. Eh, poor child, she takes it very hard. I will go fetch her to presently."

"O wise mother, give me some light! What does she take so hard and against comfort?"

"Sonties! my son, she knew herself naked as a needle in a man's hands; and sure, nakedness is the hardest shame a maid finds to bear till she passes to be no maid. For what a maid knows by her mind is but half known and dead; but shame of nakedness she knows by her body all over, and it is alive and very keen."

"Brother," said Tor, "does this answer suffice you?"

"No, I guess there is more to uncoil."

"Eh, ye menkind, but have patience, and I will find her out. Give me time and have patience."

When she was gone, Tor stood silent and moody, and Aglovale read him and waited.

Said Tor, low, "Brother Sir Aglovale, I said an unkind word to you in our trouble."

"Alas!" said Aglovale, "but it was just enough; and sooth your forbearing to speak was harder to bear."

"Ah, pardon me, Aglovale, what I shall say; but I would know what I have no right to ask."

"I will answer."

"You kept chastity in deed. You kept my daughter her maidenhood. O fair brother, an I do bear in mind what you were once, it is with worship and wonder for what you are now. Yet though the past is past, it has been, and it was exceeding foul with lechery: that we all knew, though you were secret. Alas! Aglovale, that was a stale field for your folding my dear daughter. I doubt but the taint of it has reached her, and troubles her as for sin."

Said Aglovale, "Fair brother, is that your whole doubt?"

"No, but the edge of it."

"Give the heart of it."

"Fair brother, we are men and knights, and no saints, and between us goes no word to blame sin on what is done in the heart. That is for God, who knows all; but also maybe for a maid awaked, who knows little, and takes her perceptions for sin."

"Ah, Tor, but I think she is not awaked; and as God knows, I did no wrong even in my heart."

"Can this be, and you a man not as Percivale was; no, nor even as Sir Lamorak and I, faulty men; no, nor even as Sir Durnor, a loose liver; but extreme. Can such corruption as yours be shed off until you shed your body to dust?"

"Faith, no! No such joy. No hope! Howbeit, glad I was verily, and the night went sweet with maiden Colombe sleeping in my arms."

"Sweet, you say, and blameless?"

Said Aglovale, smiling, "Simple man, burning had not been sweet."

"As God made us! How came you by so much chastity?"

"I do believe only as I came by so innocent a maid."

He was smiling still, and Tor said, "Is this jest or earnest?"

"No jest. I do but consider how the dread I had of the maid was as needless as the dread she had of me."

"You dreaded."

"Sooth, I did. For the last night I passed with woman was that with Annowre, the whore Sir Durnor set on me. Now I could thank him for that proof, though there was dread in the remembrance."

"How, dread? You were tried but you did not sin."

"Sooth, in my heart I did, though I kept my will and I kept my sword. Sure, Tor, had I so burned by your daughter, though she should have risen a maid, she would not have been so innocent in her blood of a man's desire as I do know she is."

Said Tor, hot and troubled, "How do you know she is?"

"I looked into her eyes; there was no dread of me. The shame she felt was but skin deep. She knows no more than her mother taught her. I have taught her nothing at all."

"This is too fine a point. You cannot know. God forgive you, Aglovale! Have you brought innocency to scorch before and not devoured?"

Aglovale lost colour, and his face was drawn and haggard as he answered low.

"I have, once. That was Gilleis, my love Gilleis. I never touched her all night through. I put my sword into her hands, and never moved. She was a maid, and good, and I a wicked man. In my heart I did what I meant to do; and she could not help but know, as I willed she should know. By me she knew she was flesh to desire; mine, for she did not kill me. And so I am alive, and she is dead."

Her name was a gaping wound. Fifteen years old was that grief, and still it was unhealed.

Upon morne silence spoke Tor, "Fair dear brother, may you never forgive yourself for evil done with? Have you not put away your sins? Yea, more, have you not now put away and redeemed the father's sin that begot me? My mother blesses you; Aries le Vaysher, and all his sons worship you for your clear forbearance and continence with man and maid, you that were once most lewd and of a most intolerable temper."

Aglovale looked at his brother, marvelling and sad. Then

he said, "God is good, and my reward is with me." Then he said, "I say to you, Tor, that rather have I to worship you and your daughter that no devil did claw me to any purpose."

"How?—me and my daughter?"

"Forbearance, Tor! I was in the field of your great goodness. You, even in your heart, you did not kill me; you uttered no vengeance; you spoke fair, I think, with sorrow for me.

"And as for continence, I was in the field of simple virginity with your daughter, and by virtue of her innocence I was staid.

"Three nights have I chambered with woman without trespass in deed: with Gilleis, my love, with the whore Annowre, and with your daughter Colombe. With Gilleis I sinned in my heart wilfully, with Annowre against my will, but with Colombe neither in will nor work."

"By my soul, I doubt not," said Tor. "I am the gladder for you." He halsed his brother fast with a sigh profound. "Lo! Aglovale, my heart within me grows big to take you in all. Forgive that child of mine should her heart be too small and weak to take you in at all."

Aglovale put him off as lightly as he could. "As for that, let be till she have the heart content of a wedded wife. And I trust waiting may not be overlong, so you hear with good will what suit I have in hand."

He told then all how he had lost and won with Sir Hermind; and he entered his suit, that with very good will Tor received.

Came Aries le Vaysher in upon them, and Sir Tor took him to question.

"Eh, sirs! Has Laykin fair not come to yet?"

He chuckled and shuffled like an old satyr as he told over again how lightly he had come at truth. She rated her Gramfer like a good one, she did, just for changing his mind to come in after the lads. Then she turned to pleading for her heifer to live, heard that was past praying for, and took to such a weeping that a man had to laugh.

Also, said Aries, Laykin was ready enough to tell her silly ramble-gambol. She fooled her uncles, without design, with mere come and go shilly-shally; so these thought she had departed, and those thought she had stayed, whereas she had slipped off and gone scudding to seek a gadding old wight. Then the mist came to mither her, and the night to clam her; she lost her footing, and came by a cut head; she fell into the water-run, and had the wit to follow it up to the springs, and so to the hut. And there she came to herself, naked, with a masterful knight, who did what he pleased with her, and put her to sleep.

Entered Tor's mother, with Laykin Colombe, fair old age and fair youth hand in hand, their eyes of the same periwinkle blue. The old mother was smiling. Colombe was all freshly and orderly arrayed. Very shy and brave and humble, she stood a moment, mounting rose above her paleness, then quitted her hold, came straight to her father and kneeled down.

"Fair dear lord my father, forgive me. I have been most foolish and perverse."

Sir Tor took her and brought her to Sir Aglovale.

"Offer amends, daughter, where most is due."

Colombe kneeled again. "Fair lord and uncle Sir Aglovale, I would make amends."

Sir Aglovale lifted her to her feet. "So, niece Colombe, you forgive that I used you roughly?" He looked at her bruised arm. "Eh, roughly! Sooth I am sorry, child."

Said Sir Tor, watching her, "Sir Aglovale would make amends, child, so you refuse him not again."

She blushed deeper, but lifted her fair face with innocent eyes, and Sir Aglovale kissed her.

Said her father, "Now shall you tell Sir Aglovale, openly or in secret, that word you had to say."

"Ah, it was folly!" she said, and her colour rose to scarlet.

"That I doubt not. I bid you speak out, for penance on folly already spoken."

"I thought no wrong," she faltered. "I did not know you my uncle." She took a breath, and spoke out bravely though abashed. "Fair sir, I wished to ask you—if you would be pleased—to marry me."

"Fair niece, and wherefore?"

She covered her face. "I was so ashamed. You made me naked and ashamed."

"I tell you, Laykin Colombe, that the covering of a smock is not the closest wear a maid has to her shame. Truly I found you in your skin, clothed well enough in virtue and modesty, and you have no cause to be ashamed. So, as you know, child, you were not laid bare of these, put down your hands into mine and look up."

She put her hands into his, and she looked up.

"Colombe," said Sir Tor, "do you know what slander you uttered?"

"Yea, I do know. But it was foolishness, not falsehood."

"Do you know that not clothing and not virtue had kept you from worst shame had you lain with a man not well endued in chastity and good will?"

"Yea, I do know," she said.

"Fair niece," said Aglovale, "when you slept in my care I loved you well, though not according to marriage; it would please me well to have you in marriage with my ward and heir, who is like to prove as noble and virtuous a man as Sir Hermind who begot him and gave him to me."

Said Colombe, shy and sedate, "Fair uncle, bespeak me to my father."

Said Tor, smiling, "This occasion is over-late, seeing you were fairly proxy-wed last night: Sir Aglovale has bedded you; you were for asking your marriage of him; and, with my good will, marry you he shall as he pleases."

Thereafter so it came to pass: young Mariet and fair Colombe loved and wedded; but neither Sir Tor nor Sir Aglovale lived to see that day.

Aries le Vaysher and his sons made all the cheer they might to worship Sir Aglovale well; and he sat it out with

a good countenance as a noble knight, and said no word to trouble them. When he stood up at last he was unsteady, and put out a hand to his brother. Smiling he said, "I have had strong mead."

Then he looked over the men, and said, "Bid up privily that brother of yours to me here."

That brother was he so unhappily ready and strong of his hands. He came, and Sir Aglovale spoke with him apart, and sent him away not so light as he came, and short to question.

Aries and his wife led Sir Aglovale to a dormer with a fair large bed, where he was to lie with Sir Tor. They offered to do off his clothes, but he would not suffer them, so with homely biddings they departed, and saw him no more.

Aglovale sat down on the bed and rested there. Tor doffed his clothes and lay down, and chid him kindly to make an end of vigil. Therefore he rose wearily and put out the light; and in the dark, softly and leisurely, he put off his clothes and lay down in the bed. Tor reached across and laid hand on his brother; he felt the cilice that was upon him.

"Is this always so, brother?" said Tor softly, and Aglovale answered curtly, "Yea so."

Moved with compassion and brotherly affection, Tor shifted closer to embrace him. Aglovale winced and gasped.

"What is here!" said Tor, startled, and sat up.

"Peace and lie down, fair brother, but let me alone; for I am not whole enough to bear your love without pain."

"How! is this the trouble of your old wound still with you?"

"Yea so. It will always be with me. I shall never be quite whole."

"Alas! this is how you win no worship with your body."

"I have no hope to win worship now."

"Uncover to me, and let me assay to handle your hurt. My virtue may be little, but my love is great."

"Gramercy, Tor," said Aglovale shortly, "you have ransacked me enough for this day. Peace and lie down, and let alone my body."



Tor kissed his cheek, and sighed as he lay down, for he had tasted tears. And still as he lay he sighed heavily, till Aglovale said wearily, "Take peace, Tor. You trouble needless. I tell you, though I lie down to sleep in penance and pain, I wake refreshed and at ease, for I have sound and perfect rest without a dream. When hope forsook me I found that blessing, and thank God it has never failed me. Take my peace upon you and sleep."

Tor felt his hand laid heavy on his heart. "May God bless you Tor, for you have comforted me often, but it is not in you to heal me."

Tor blessed him to God again and lay still; and against the tranquil pressure of his brother's hand he ceased to heave troubled breath, and soon he lay a-sleeping, sound and dreamless.

But Aglovale lay broad awake; and when he felt that slumber was deep enough, he stole away his hand, and, moving carefully, left the bed. Very softly and leisurely he did on his clothes, and made his way quietly through the sleeping house to the door alatch, and issued to the moony night. Up stood the churl Flynn from shadow, and silently led the way through the rickyard to where his horse waited ready. Said Sir Aglovale, groaning, "Man, you have half slain me. Now take me away to end or to mend, and keep me to yourself."



## CHAPTER XXIV

**K**ING ARTHUR was holding his court at Carlisle when Sir Tor again met his brother. Passing eager was he to see him again, by reason of a certain thing he had heard of him there, from the new-made suffragan of Carlisle, sometime Prior elsewhere. That good hard man had aged and ripened well ; and when a certain young clerk told him how Sir Tor awaited all-comers for tidings of his brother, kindly he sent for him, to impart that he knew ; and seeing how true and tender was his brotherly affection, he was moved to advise with him fully, in so far as he was free of his office to put off reserve. He told more than he knew. This was his tale.

As in autumn past he was on his way to the call of his Archbishop, a churl with a great horse met him near nightfall, and prayed him to go with him, to bless six foot of earth for a Christian grave, and a Christian for to lie in it. So he left his tired mule to his clerk, and mounted and rode as fast as he could go ; and fleet the churl ran. Off the road he took him, and far over moorland through the night, till they reached a poor hut ; and there in great pain and fever he found Sir Aglovale, seeming near his end.

“Wellaway,” said Tor, “if that hut I should know ! by seven springs ? and that fleet churl. Wo, wo, what blame is here ?”

“I tell of no blame,” said the suffragan.

Sir Aglovale’s hurt, he said, he ransacked to good effect ; but so perilous was it to do that first he confessed him and made him ready to die ; and the churl came also to be shriven

clean ; and he made the blessed Bread, and as Christian brothers they received their Saviour and were greatly comforted. Then he ransacked.

“ Ah, Jesu ! ” said Tor. “ Tell me what was his hurt ? ”

He said he found him broken-ribbed and bruised, with his old wound laid open. And when he ransacked he discovered there at his rib the old splinter of a spear ; and so he drew it out and eased him.

Said Tor, quaking, “ I misdoubt sore how this was done. Ah, my brothers both ! may God mend you this bout. Yea, Sir, be amazed and pitiful ; sure am I that churl was my brother Flynn, near to me as Sir Aglovale ; a kindly man and most staunch, but hasty withall, and passing strong for his size. ”

“ I tell of no blame, ” said the suffragan, again.

“ God above ! ” cried Tor, “ did my brother Sir Aglovale think to die in the dark ! Did my brother Flynn think to bury him in the dark ! And to leave me in the dark ! ”

“ Now rest you in the dark, Sir Tor, and deem no more harm than what I am free to reveal. ”

What he had still to reveal was no little harm ; his search discovered more than he could remove : a shred of iron, dislodged from the bone, remained deep-seated so near the heart that he dared not deal. He said certainly that Sir Aglovale was not rightly fit to bear arms, nor ever again would be. Then, as Sir Tor showed great distress, he spoke of noble knights, as Sir Brastias, who, at the decline of their day, left their place in the world to serve God in religious life. Sir Tor took small comfort of that prospect for his brother, and he carried away a heart lead-heavy.

Nigh upon the feast of Pentecost came Sir Aglovale and Sir Hermind, bringing young Mariet before King Arthur on request for the high order of knighthood.

Tor beheld his brother gaunt and languid, with his hand now and then at his side ; yet scarce knew what to believe, for he wore harness complete, his gaze was untroubled, he took question and reproach with easy foil and composure, and his grave smile played.

That same day came to Carlisle Sir Urre of Hungary, seeking one to heal him. Seven wounds he had that should never be whole till searched by the best knight of the world, for so had enchantment been wrought. Before King Arthur was this tale told ; and, good and gracious, straightway he promised that he himself and all of the Round Table there present should assay the healing. Then was Sir Urre laid in a meadow beside Eden river, and thither came the King and his knights. And first Arthur courteously and gently handled the seven wounds and failed ; and after him six kings handled and failed ; and after them came knights more than an hundred and handled and failed. Sir Urre's wounds bled more or less under each hand, and he endured much and got no ease.

Sir Aglovale stood with the rest, and saw this doing, in growing distress, his hand at his side. Sir Hermind and Sir Tor touched and failed ; but he at his turn went and besought King Arthur to excuse him ; very earnestly he prayed, saying he was in no case to heal, for himself he was not sound. He spoke in vain ; Arthur would set none excused. All grey and trembling he took his place beside the wounded man, muttered his prayers, and with shaking hand touched. Seven times at his touch blood gushed, and Sir Urre winced and groaned.

" Well, well ! " said Arthur.

He whom I love so much in his nineteenth book tells how an hundred and ten knights tried and failed ; and then came in one more, even Launcelot, who desired very earnestly to be excused. And there may be read how, when he had kneeled and prayed, he searched the seven wounds in head and body and hand, and all healed fair under his touch ; and how kings and knights praised God on their knees ; and how Launcelot wept.

So a whole and lusty man Sir Urre rose up and went on his feet into Carlisle church, a long array of clerks and knights with him, to offer thanksgiving with the Te Deum.

There Launcelot lifted up his eyes and saw Sir Aglovale ; with his head bowed down he kneeled and never moved, and did not join in that hymn with his lips.

" Patrem immense majestatis. Unum venerandum verum

et unicum Filium. Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum. Tu Rex gloriæ Christe."

With the chanting Launcelot heard in his heart a mocking word Sir Kay had passed.

"Well, well," said Kay, "Sir Urre would have found the bare blade of Sir Aglovale less redoubtable than his bare hand."

"Judex crederis esse venturus."

Launcelot smote down his head.

"Te ergo quaesumus tuis famulis subire, quos pretioso Sanguine redemisti."

Sir Aglovale stood aside in the dark of the aisle and watched Sir Urre, as with King Arthur and Sir Launcelot he came swinging by full of vigour. Launcelot lifted his eyes as he came by, looked at him, faltered in his stride, faced forward again, and passed. Aglovale, his hand against his side, stayed breathless, motionless, wondering on the looks of Launcelot.

In honour of Sir Urre justs were called for the morrow. On that day King Arthur bestowed on young Mariet the high order of knighthood; and gracious counsel he gave withall, for from the first his heart had inclined greatly to the young man, in whom he saw somewhat of the grace and spirit of his great kinsman Lamorak. So Sir Mariet went out to be proved; and Arthur let the day be for the stranger and the young names, withholding from the field his dangerous knights. Sir Tor and Sir Hermind at his request took no part; but Sir Aglovale armed and went out with Sir Mariet.

That was the last time that ever he laid spear in rest. He broke no spear at all that day; many courses he ran, and at every course went down shocked over his horse's tail; and in the mellay he fared worse, and lay trampled till Sir Mariet with much pain horsed him again, and brought him out of the press; and Sir Tor, white as a sheet, came down and persuaded him away.

Then Tor spoke, "Oh, brother, it is no use. How many times have you been overthrown this day?"

"Twenty-four times as I count," said Sir Aglovale. "I have done my best."

"Wo! Will you take no keep?" said Tor. "It is no use. Brother Sir Aglovale, I must speak. You will win worship no more; so forbear, for you stand to lose and lose. Bethink you of your noble strain, and forbear this madness, if not for your own sake, yet for theirs of your blood, that they tingle not for their blood in you. For the sake of Sir Lamorak dead, for the sake of Sir Mariet alive, bring not body and blood into slight and derision."

Aglovale rested and eyed his brother hard. "How now so pale, fair brother? Will your blood not tingle for me? Eh, bastard, but you are near and dear enough to cry me for your own sake."

Tor had no force nor skill to endure his scrutiny. "An you love me," he cried, "only take some keep of your life—of your life. Yea, for I know, I know—you left me unkindly yet I do know."

"What?" said Aglovale.

Tor pointed. "What has Flynn done?" he sobbed.

Then followed some open speech. But as for all that Flynn had done Sir Aglovale left that tale to a lighter day; how he carried him to the lonely hut and ensured secrecy and tended him well; how he played the fox nightly and for sustenance prowled and robbed his brethren; how he played the devil and stole Sir Aglovale's shirt of hair, and wore it privily himself to keep him from it, and was afterwards caught out jiggling over that prank; how he dreaded against his death, and, above all, against his dead body from a grave secret and unhallowed, and fetched ghostly comfort unbidden; how he played the man and dared Sir Aglovale to teach him against his will, and before they parted taught him instead that he was Flynn the Wrestler, thrice putting him down deftly and carefully; how afterwards, willing well to be taught, he was disappointed; whereupon he played the rogue and duped Sir Aglovale, so that he contented him at last.

But at this time there was no talk outside the heart of Tor's distress; and Aglovale was passing weary.

"Stint this dole," he said. "These many years I have

carried this danger under the fifth rib unknown ; and howbeit Flynn has struck it loose, I yet hope to meet another death, straight and clean, from some noble knight, apart from the blunder of a churl."

Sir Tor spoke then of noble knights ending their days, as did Sir Brastias, in the way of devotion.

Said Aglovale, " I am no such noble knight as these."

Sir Mariet came in from the field, a sight to cheer ; joy and pride aglow were blent with filial care and deference. Bravely and modestly he answered of his deeds : he had been well proved ; he had won worship ; twenty knights had he overthrown or pulled down, and but one, Sir Lavaine, had unhorsed him.

Sir Lavaine had won the diamond, the prize of the justs ; and he had set it in the hand of Sir Urre's sister, fair Felelolie. Sir Mariet for his part had won more than he looked to win : King Arthur had openly approved him ; had called him and questioned him ; had bidden him for privy audience to his chamber.

When Sir Aglovale heard that he drew up with a drear smile and eyes wide.

Sir Mariet put off his harness and made ready. He was young and happy then, yet moisture came to his eyes as he looked upon Sir Aglovale ; and he seeing that, for loving-kindness went with him on his way, went all the way with him. So they paced to the palace together, the worn-out knight and the knight just proved, and through the thronged hall, and up by a parclose stair to the gallery above nigh to the King's chamber. Then Sir Aglovale blessed him to God and stood, and Sir Mariet went on in to the King.

Aglovale looked after him with his drear smile. Almost he knew what King Arthur had to say.

The gallery was dark with a screen of arras. From the hall below mounted a surge of noise, voices tumbled together or eddied sharp. Beyond the stairhead was a window, and Sir Aglovale turned aside, and leaned out to rest and breathe. He looked upon a narrow close ; two passed below, Lavaine and

Felelolie. They turned to each other and kissed together. So had he first seen the kiss of Gilleis and her true love long ago.

Presently from the Queen's parlour came down Sir Launcelot. From the further reach of the gallery he espied one seated at the window-sill, slumbering, he thought, and so lightly he trod as he came. Then seeing it was Sir Aglovale he stood still. He could look his full now at ease ; with all his heart he looked.

This was a man younger than he, still in the middle prime of life, with the face of an old man deeply lined and worn ; only close black hair kept truth to his years. The disfigurement he bore seemed but the fit and final stroke to the havoc that life had done.

He did not sleep. In the waft of stray fragments of speech came his name, and he lifted his head. To sharpened senses the strain of a voice carried distinct. For a byword and a jest, not with malice against him, but lightly and currently, his name was used in disparagement ; and that mocking sentence of Sir Kay was quoted thereupon.

Aglovale sat upright, a man alone with himself, unconscious of the eyes of Launcelot. A dark tinge stole up to ears and hair and slowly faded ; but his breath came even, his eyes were still and pensive, his hands lay open and quiet. For a moment he stayed motionless after that voice was lost ; with crossing then he signed his body ; wearily he leaned to repose.

Sir Launcelot went backward, loth then to encounter any but his own self. Through the partings of the arras he could look down upon the hall and its throng of noble knights. All those worshipped him as their best.

Down from the King's chamber came young Sir Mariet stiff and blind. He came to the stair, and stood to breathe and clear his eyes ; then he saw Sir Aglovale at the window and turned aside to him. Launcelot moved further away lest he should overhear.

Sir Mariet stood and spoke ; he kneeled down and spoke ; he laid hold of Sir Aglovale's hand and bowed his head against his knees. He was weeping. Sir Aglovale sat very still and said little. He put down his hand upon the young man's head.



Presently Sir Mariet got up from his knees and departed. Sir Aglovale rested, his chin upon his hands.

Came Sir Launcelot and paused. Aglovale stood up and his hand went to his side. Neither offered any form of salutation, but eye to eye in scrutiny long and deep waited silent. Like a windy sea encompassing swung the voice of the full hall.

Said Aglovale, "Speak, sir! Speak out on me what is in your heart."

Low was Launcelot's answer, yet it broke like thunder: "Hear then, Sir Aglovale, what is in my heart ripe for telling: I envy you. You above all men in the world I envy. Would to God I were such a man as you."

Lo! great Launcelot enters the hall. High acclaims and gladness greeted him, for as the Chevalier du Chariot he came among them with a year's adventure in hand.

Lo! an hour later Aglovale passes. Like a ghost he went through unchallenged, with dazed stare over the beaming court. Launcelot there beside the noble King and friend he so foully wronged, within his guilty heart sighed again, "Would to God I were such a man as he."



## CHAPTER XXV

**T**HE next record of Aglovale has to tell how he refused in the day of stress to serve Sir Launcelot, whom he worshipped and loved, and turned his hand against him instead.

There is little need to set out at any length the splendid and piteous story of how that noble King Arthur, and his great fellowship of the Table Round, were broken and ruined and ended; for he whom I love so much has made it well known. Briefly shall it be touched here, but for the purpose of showing how Aglovale came by his death.

Came the night of fear when the long dishonour done to Arthur was uncloked with guile and ambush. For years the shameful secret had been but half hid, and ever the buzz about Launcelot and Guenever thickened and grew, and upon the King himself whispers ran loud, with foul titles to one fondly pretending a faithful Queen and a loyal friend. At length his nephews, Agravaine and Mordred, forced upon him unwelcome knowledge, and with his leave made ready to furnish him proof.

The breath of disaster was in the night. Aglovale could not sleep, and rose to pace restless as on the dreadful night at Cardigan; yet he knew no cause for his disquiet. The world lay at hush under moonrise. Beneath his eye the roofs of Carlisle sank dim, steeped in mist, half seen; above, the King's palace loomed on its height. Not there did Arthur lie that night, but far away. One spark of light near below shone from the lodging of Sir Launcelot. Obscured and bright

again and again it winked. There also one was pacing restless to and fro. Sir Bors, awaiting Sir Launcelot's return from the Queen, in vague disquiet and dread felt the night ; and all in arms, summoned they knew not why, knights of his blood waited with him.

A prickle of sound came into the slumberous night. Aglovale leaned and strained his ears ; it died on the breeze ; it returned ; unmistakably the sound was of battle. Whence it came he scarce could tell, for the great walls of the palace folded it in. He did on some harness, took his sword, and went out to ease his dread.

In the open no sound came down to his level. No sound had reached beyond to Sir Launcelot's lodging, for still the light winked as before. Doubtful he stood till he heard one clatter and stumble down the steep from the palace ; and sob and curse ; and the sound of a horse. Past at a gallop went a knight, bowed, swaying, blood-stained ; the King's son and nephew, Sir Mordred.

At that Aglovale pushed on, sure of dire mischief. Broken and breathless with the speed of ascent he came to the precincts of the palace, and dragged along painfully, drawn by the sound of groans. From the Queen's stair he saw one issue laden with a dead man, and cast him down beside others dead and dying. By his stature and stride Aglovale knew him, as wrapping a mantle over his harness, with his sword bare in his hand, he struck down from the bridle-path by a steeper footway. Yea ! he came to the slain, and heard dying men cry curses after Launcelot, traitor and adulterer proved.

Thirteen knights of the Round Table lay there dead and dying. They had trapped Sir Launcelot unarmed in the Queen's chamber, but take him even so they could not. The foremost of his foes he had let through ; he had slain him and taken his harness ; he had broken forth against them and had smitten all to death, save Mordred fled.

Sir Aglovale called out scared servants to carry in the wounded. One was Sir Agravaine, senseless as the dead but still alive. The sons of Gawaine were alive, Sir Florence and

Sir Lovel ; a third, Sir Gingalin, was dead already. But plainly all were past cure of their bodies. Sir Aglovale sent in all haste to fetch ghostly aid, and right soon holy clerks came ; young Clerk Hew came with others ; and later came the good suffragan of Carlisle himself, with the blessed Bread, and all save Sir Agravaine were shriven and prepared for their end as Christian men.

At length Sir Agravaine came to his senses and spoke ; he asked after his brother Mordred, after Sir Launcelot, after his fellows. Mordred fled, Launcelot escaped, the rest all slain, dead or dying ; so he heard.

"Yea, I know I am slain," said Agravaine ; and presently murmured, "Who answers there?"

"King Pellinore's son—Aglovale."

"You!" said Agravaine. The old flame of malice kindled. "As I am a dying man, hear me, Sir Aglovale, how I do repent me on your account."

"In the name of God!" said Aglovale.

"Hear, Sir Aglovale! That I did not provide you with a larger stone to your neck, and with surer knots, for that I am right sorry."

Under his breath Sir Aglovale muttered, "O poor fool!"

At his shoulder stood Clerk Hew ; from one to the other he glanced, surmising ; shocked he knew. He saw the grin of agony and enmity relax in a swoon like death, and aghast with pity and horror he feared that the dying man had spent his last words.

In the end Sir Agravaine left this world in better case for the next ; for when after some hours he returned to consciousness, the good suffragan confessed him well, and brought him to a fitter mind ; and as a devout Christian he forgave all his enemies, and received his rights, and died without pain in the arms of his best brother, Sir Gareth. Clerk Hew, for his part, attended the death-watch, and prayed very fervently peace to his soul.

At Sir Aglovale's lodging a messenger from Sir Bors awaited him, praying him to come forthwith to the lodging of Sir Launcelot. His heart died with doubt and dismay, for he

knew what manner of grief and trouble was at hand, but he knew not how to face it. In sore distress of mind he went.

A throng of knights he met issuing as he entered: the half of the fellowship of the Round Table, or more; the mightiest and noblest of them then alive. Grave and resolute they were to see, and there was little speaking among them.

Good Sir Bors greeted him. "Ah, sir, though you be come so late, I was right sure you would come."

He excused himself, saying how he had passed the night.

"Sir Aglovale," said Bors, "well may you know what trouble is upon us all, since clearly it was by the ordering of King Arthur that Sir Launcelot has been well-nigh trapped and slain by treason, on suspicion with the Queen."

"Yea, I have heard."

"Sir Launcelot is ready and fain to answer as a knight should; and well would he maintain that he went to the Queen's chamber for no evil purpose, and that she is a true and faithful lady to her lord."

"Yea, I deemed Sir Launcelot would answer so."

Said Bors, "There is dread among us that King Arthur will not grant him leave so to answer, but will rather condemn to shameful death both the Queen and him."

"To shameful death! Sir Launcelot!"

"Now may you declare, Sir Aglovale, whether you love better King Arthur or Sir Launcelot, to hold with the one or the other; for certainly there will come mortal war between them if the King will not abide by the custom he has made."

"Alas!" said Aglovale, "you know well that I love Sir Launcelot above the King, and owe to him more than to any man alive."

Bors looked at him amazed, for his voice was faint and broken, and his visage grey and drawn.

"In good time," said Bors; "here comes Sir Launcelot. Go make your answer to his face."

Launcelot came in with his brother Ector. By the set of

his face, the play of his eyes, the barrier look, Aglovale understood without doubt what his word of honour would be, and what the worth of it.

"Sir Aglovale, how may I look upon you? There now is need to know who do love me well enough to hold with me against King Arthur our lord."

Pale and speechless stood Aglovale. Face to face with Launcelot, love and gratitude fought hard on the side of wrong, and his heart clapped and beat, frantic to go free. Launcelot spoke on, saying what he had to say before the world, and under his eyes reddened deep; above all, strangely compelling beyond words, Launcelot under his eyes reddened deep. Launcelot guilty, asking his countenance, his hand, provided the better proof for his love and worship.

Launcelot ceased; he had to answer. Husky and scarce audible he said, "Alas! Sir Launcelot, I cannot hold with you."

Said Launcelot, "Oh, speak out what you have to say!"

"I cannot hold with you. Though none soever that shall name you traitor, and Queen Guenever untrue, can make good his words upon your body, I cannot hold with you."

There was a moment of charged silence, and then Launcelot spoke. The set of his face, the play of his eyes, the barrier look were not altered; his accents struck firm and measured.

"Sooth, sir, I doubted you."

"Nay," cried Bors, "I doubt his meaning, I doubt my ears. Speak right, Sir Aglovale!"

"Alas! Sir Aglovale, I vouched for you confidently in your absence, as ready and fain and sure. Ah, sir, make good what I said to your worship, for there are but few to speak so for you. All the world would cry shame were you to refuse Sir Launcelot in the hour of stress. Yea, and I also."

Said Aglovale, "Yea, I know it."

"I tell you men will call to mind how you stood in danger of shameful death, and Sir Launcelot then delivered you. Ah, sir, none other has denied him; with one voice a hundred

good knights have answered and approved his quarrel, and are pledged to defend him from wrong; yet has he a better claim on you than on any of them."

Said Aglovale, "Yea, I know it."

"Sir Aglovale, I speak as a friend and your well-wisher; and for your own sake, and for love of Sir Percivale your brother I will speak at large. Sir, neither the might of your body nor the worship of your name were much profit to Sir Launcelot, and yet he is right fain and earnest to have you on his side. As you do know, Sir Launcelot has ever excused you in gentleness, King Arthur never; the one has reached his hand to you, the other has set his foot on you. I warn you that according to your own showing now, shall word go out whether you deserve this or that."

Said Aglovale, "Yea, I know, I know."

"Enough!" said Launcelot.

"Sir Aglovale," said Ector, "may we look to meet you at another time, in another place, in another fashion, to a better purpose."

His meaning was plain. All three looked swords upon him: the three most kindly-hearted knights of the fellowship. He held his side with both hands; and as he gazed from one to another damps of anguish came out on his brow and his pallor grew extreme.

"I pray not! I cannot answer for myself, should he call me that has the right; yet God knows I had liefer go out of the world."

Bors turned away with tears in his eyes. "Wellaway! I have no good will ever to look on you again."

Said Ector, "Sir Aglovale, if ever again we meet in place at the Round Table—may God and King Arthur so grant we do—there if we meet it may be to some purpose: that I ask you whether or no you be a coward. And I warn you take heed to your answer, considering the upshot; for whichever you say, I am ready and fain to maintain the contrary to the uttermost; yea, well and truly, for I am of two minds upon you."

Sir Aglovale was white and quivering, yet some semblance of smiling distorted his visage and incensed Sir Ector.

"Ah, grinning dog! Show the face of a man lest I bring the blood there quick!"

"Peace, peace," said Launcelot. "Leave Sir Aglovale to me."

So Sir Ector also turned away, and Sir Launcelot came nearer. Noblest and gentlest of all knights, this was the last he spoke to Aglovale :

"Pardon me, Sir Aglovale, that I brought you to this. Sooth, I doubted you well and truly."

His eyes were kind and sorrowful, and gave from the deeps as once before.

"O most true man! I find no fault with you for your answer. Nor shall any that love me speak more against you. I go not back on what I have said of you : first and last what I have said of you. I fought you up to death for your good name : for my good name and my lady the Queen's safety I may go as far—or further. Ah, sir, but I doubt heavily now my sword in my hand will work to my unhappiness. Pray sometime for my poor soul."

Tears rushed to Aglovale's eyes and blotted dim his last sight of Sir Launcelot's face. He found his hand. Former words of Sir Launcelot rose to his lips :

"God have mercy on your soul—and keep you body alive——" His voice broke, the rest was unspoken.

Launcelot turned back to Ector and Bors. "I shall not slay a better man than Sir Aglovale de Galis."

"Faith, Sir Launcelot," said Ector, "then you intend large mercies."

"Ah, no!" said Launcelot. "I tell you he is the most upright man that ever I met. He heeds not the face of man nor the breath of man. That poor body of his holds a heart strong enough to stand alone against the world."

"He has the heart to stand against you, brother! You to whom he owes, such as it is, his shabby life. Yea, to give you to know, brother, that he counts you a traitor and a liar. Yet



he has no heart for plain words and deadly. He shirks: he will not answer knightly."

Launcelot said over, "Liar and traitor," sharply behind his teeth. "Black names—intolerable—deserved or undeserved; yet one did avow them to himself and stood to his words right knightly in battle. You were of the first to excuse him then that he might live: by right your excuse should cover him now. And I that fought him then up to death, and tempted him to go from his troth, I may not blame him now: I will not; and that I have promised him. And I charge you, as you love me, to forbear him, and to speak no blame on him for my sake."

"Be it as you will, Sir Launcelot," said Ector. "Yet for all you say Sir Aglovale goes not by the ways of knighthood."

"Alas for knighthood!" sighed Launcelot.

Aglovale betook him to his lodging, and all that humming day he stirred no more abroad. Now Sir Tor and now Sir Hermind came in with tidings: Sir Launcelot and all his friends were departed; King Arthur was come, breathing deadly; Queen Guenever was condemned to the fire, on the morrow she should be burnt; the King was requiring all loyal knights to be present at her death, to prevent rescue and to take Sir Launcelot; Sir Gawaine had refused him out and out; others had refused or avoided; Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth would be present, but no arms against Sir Launcelot would they bear; King Arthur was calling in his knights one by one to answer as to their allegiance.

Sir Tor and Sir Hermind were called.

"Brother," said Tor, "speak now. What shall I do?"

Little had Aglovale spoken at all; scarcely had he moved. As from hour to hour he waited tidings, his eyes set hard and wide, his hands locked hard against his side, one to the other likened him to a wounded creature that takes covert, and listens while the hunt goes to and fro and draws near.

Said Sir Hermind also: "Give me counsel; and I, as you shall counsel me, so will I do."

He would give none.

"May I question? When King Arthur calls on you, what answer will you make?"

"On me—me—if King Arthur calls on me—my God—I—must speak!"

Tor drew his kinsman away. "Let him alone, and beware not to meddle with him when he is white at the lips."

At the day's end came the king's summons to Aglovale also. Straightway he rose to go, spread his arms, and fell prone heavily.

It was near an hour before he came to himself again. Tor was beside him in great distress; he owned he had searched him and seen for himself.

"Ah, peace, and lie still. Fair dear brother, you cannot go. Aglovale, you cannot stand or go."

"It is to King Arthur," he said feebly. "I will. Help me this time."

He showed he was able to stand and go, for his will was passing strong. Tor came and drew his hand round his neck; and, as under gathering night he lifted him along, a far-off time was big at his heart.

Said Aglovale softly, upon the same remembrance, "Ah, good brother, ever so!"

It was piercing; tears sprang; he could not speak.

Sir Hermind fell in with them, and readily he took the place of a brother beside Aglovale; and he put no question. So, slowly and painfully, in the dark, up the steep went Aglovale at the last summons of Arthur. And all the way Sir Tor could not speak, and his tears ran down, for his heart was loaded with the weight of the panting boy he had carried for knighthood across the level green, sun-bright, battle-bright, at the first summons of Arthur.

## CHAPTER XXVI

"WHO comes?" said Arthur.

Kay answered, "Sir Aglovale de Galis."

"Sir Aglovale, you are welcome," said Arthur.

"God 'a mercy!" muttered Kay as he withdrew.

Alone and in gloom sat the king, bereft of joy for ever, in awful dignity invested by his just anger and great woe. With his beard in his hand he kept silence a long while, his fixed stare set upon the pallid, motionless man who stood by the door, vaguely lighted by the play of a solitary flare. So still was the place that when Arthur spoke, hardly above a breath, the words carried.

"Face of Pellinore! O Maker God! Here and now—the face of Pellinore!"

Came answer in Pellinore's voice, faint as a ghost's.

"Sir, here am I, Pellinore's son Aglovale."

Then Arthur gathered his senses, lifted his head wearily, and spoke out.

"Sir Aglovale, what brings you here?"

"Sir, obedience."

"Well said. Hear and obey. I require you to be ready in arms to-morn to ensure my justice."

"How, my lord, me?"

"Hear and obey, Sir Aglovale. This is my will. To-morrow my false lady, Queen Guenever, shall have the law to be burnt for her misdeeds; and as shameful a death awaits Sir Launcelot so soon as he shall be taken."

"My lord Arthur, look upon me so as to set me excused. Oh, sir, from shameful death Sir Launcelot delivered me."

Said Arthur, slowly: "How so to look upon you? I know not how. Be nearer—here; aye, for I would look upon you."

Pellinore's likeness faded as Aglovale moved up the light, and by the king's footstool kneeled down and lifted up his disfigured countenance. The face of Arthur was in shade. Again he fell to silence and a fixed stare; when he spoke his words came level and slow as from a trance.

"Ah, this visage should be Launcelot's wear for truth—not his own; so inscribed from brow to chin with the proper signs. No counterfeit: a visage that to the light of day bears witness to knighthood blackened and debased."

Upon that ensued silence again, till Aglovale spoke in his turn, level and slow.

"O my lord Arthur, though King Pellinore loved you, and Sir Lamorak loved you, and you made me knight, I have a word to say for Sir Launcelot.

"Sir, look upon me and upon Sir Launcelot as we deserve; I the blemish, and he the pride of the most noble fellowship in Christendom. By the blame that for half my lifetime I have carried, that has grown to me, that here kneels incarnate, hear me speak to deny it on Sir Launcelot.

"O my lord, I know well that the shameful death you held over me was not for the villainy I did, that destroyed the lady that pitied me and the knight that trusted me: in their noble simplicity me they pitied and trusted! And lo, the fellowship of the Round Table is none so white that my name alone has been noised for trespass and betrayal under trust, until now when shameful death is held over Sir Launcelot.

"When, after seven years, I came before you and you denied me recognition and grace, I know well I had done nothing at all to do away your displeasure: and with seven clean, upright, diligent years I came before you, and with young Percivale. Nothing at all! But then I did not know; and I was to learn."

With his chin in his hand Arthur rested in gloomy contemplation, deeming he saw through this worthless, ill-conditioned son of Pellinore, speaking not for Launcelot but for himself.

"O my lord," said Aglovale, "you have not spared to teach me, and now I do know my offence, my most dire offence in your sight: once I answered unknighly for my sins.

"But for that avowal, lightly had I been quit of the shame I deserved. I had not gone derided to get my death; I had not been enforced to grievous penance; I had not lost my heritage; I had not been shown your aversion; I had not lived an example to shun before my fellows."

"Well, well!" said Arthur.

"Sir, I bring no case that you should consider to restore me from disgrace: in all knightly justs and adventures I have so failed. Once you tried me, and in unhappiness I failed, and forsook the Quest of Launcelot that you gave me."

Said Arthur, "I had not forgot."

Aglovale lifted up his eyes to the inexorable King, and beheld at heart the face of Launcelot, with kindly eyes, grave, considerate, better than compassionate.

"Yet Sir Launcelot himself would forget, and have me forget. He kept me from cart and cord, and him I failed; yet never by word or sign has he reproached me for that unhappy neglect."

"Enough, Sir Aglovale. I will be brief with you. You provide your own answer. Since you took no keep of your own honour then, neither will I now: so I will not set you excused. Since you have done me no manner of service all these years, I require you serve without fail now: so I will not set you excused."

"My lord Arthur, I have served you truly all these years. Though you had no use for me but to score me down for warning, even so I served you as to that, loyally, constantly. Your looks bit like swords, your words struck like spears. I took no keep for my face: I stood; charged and displayed for the behoof of my fellows, appointed to reprobation. Year after year I have waited on you and served you thus."

"Speak out and end, Sir Aglovale. I shall think no worse of you howsoever you speak. But, by my head, grace does

not go so cheap to-day that such dog-service as yours gives you purchase."

With gravity and calm that checked the disgust of Arthur, Aglovale answered.

"Alas! sir, what grace you have to bestow I have lost the heart to value. And naught you could offer would outweigh three words from Sir Launcelot. Generous and gentle ever, he has spoken for me when your face was set against me; he has remembered me and cared to approach me when none else did; he has held up my heart time and again by virtue of a look; beyond and above all he has put worth upon this poor life of mine by three words he gave me."

"Ha, traitor, this to my face! Are you here to declare for Sir Launcelot against my very face?"

"No, sir," faltered Aglovale, and his voice broke to say, "No, sir, to his face I have refused Sir Launcelot."

"Well, well!" said Arthur under his breath, in a measure astonished.

"King Arthur, you made Launcelot knight, you made me knight. Consider us both; judge us both side by side, us two, fellows of the Round Table, I the blemish, Launcelot the pride. He knightly is ready and fain to deny all that Sir Mordred has brought against him; to maintain by his word of honour and by his body's might that for no treason he went privily to your Queen, but to avoid scandal."

Arthur beat downward with his hand. "How now—you also!"

"Who has dearer cause to speak?"

"Let be! Sir Gawaine cried me thus, and it was even vain."

"My lord, I bear the better right to be heard."

"You?"

"I cry you by the blame and the shame set so fast upon me in vindication of knightly code and usage, for Sir Launcelot, my fellow, to be taken according to the same code and usage and not contrary."

Arthur clenched his hand and hammered again. "By God's truth, no!" he cried. "By God's truth, no!"

"God's truth?" said Aglovale, his teeth set. "It was truth I owned to my undoing. But Sir Launcelot would knightly offer his body to God's judgment in battle."

"Not so. He is too sure and mighty. None could make good the truth against him."

"Sooth and well! And peradventure the judgment of God is even so sure in his hands."

Sir Aglovale kneeled stiff as a stock; he spoke evenly, his gaze was hardy, his lips were white.

"King of Heaven!" cried Arthur. "Lo! this creature derides either Thee or me. Out with your rotten pretences in one breath! Speak!"

"Consider, my lord: peradventure the judgment of God may decree you to keep your whore and still be her cully."

King Arthur leaped up and snatched his sword. Quick death flashed at Aglovale close as when Launcelot played upon him, and his heart stood still. Twice King Arthur offered again to strike, and could not, so much of Pellinore eyed him in the son. He fell back cursing with a sob.

Aglovale shuddered hard, and sweat broke. When he got his breath he spoke in an altered fashion; it was to rehearse the vow of fealty. He offered his hands palm to palm; Arthur touched unwilling, deeming no honour to either party in such submission. Sorry hearing was this hollow renewal of troth once delivered in youthful ardour and devotion; sorry and pitiful.

Said Arthur, "Fie on this grovelling! This turn is fitter for a fanged worm than a Christian knight, and Pellinore's son."

Said Aglovale, "Mercy on my life that I may speak! Answer how you will with your sword when I have spoken."

He reached out his hands and set them on the King's knees. Arthur laid his sword across his lap.

"Hear now, O Arthur! what the last of Pellinore's house has to tell you."

Though his voice shook he looked the King straight in the eyes. Arthur stirred, and breathed to God, and at that



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Aglovale leaned down his head against his hands. He did not look again upon the face of Arthur.

“Once my father, King Pellinore, fought in a foul cause, even on behalf of incest, adultery, and murder.”

Not a stroke nor a word came from the King.

“In that guilty war had right prevailed, not King Lot, the wronged husband of Morgause, had fallen, but Uther’s son Arthur.”

So the charge began. Far into the night the count ran on, and he that heard and he that told kept place unaltered, only Aglovale leaned hands and head more heavy on the King’s knees.

In the days of his youth Arthur sinned with Morgause, King Lot’s wife, not knowing that he and she were sprung from the same womb. With knowledge of the fatal truth and the measure of his guilt came dread of doom to follow oppressing his soul. Then came Merlin and foretold that the fruit of incest should prove his bane. But he, in a black hour, thought to compass his safety by a horrid deed: for the sake of one born on May-day, many May-day innocents he sent to perish on the seas. And but one of all these escaped alive, the very babe of his fears, his son and nephew, Mordred.

War came, and many princes and lords, because of these foul deeds of his, revolted to join his enemies. Yet in the day of battle, with the league of just vengeance and King Lot against him; with incest, adultery, and murder to weigh down his fortunes; spite of great odds he prevailed, and came forth so washed in glory that men no longer perceived the full colour of his guilt.

Lot lay buried richly; just victories succeeded the unjust; Arthur took the sons of Lot to be as his own; he took to wife the fairest of women, and he established the noblest fellowship of the world; for the Table Round with an hundred knights was the gift King Leodegrance sent with his daughter, Guenever. And surely, if ever evil could be covered and done away, that loving kindness of his to the sons might cover the wrong against the sire; and faithful wedlock with his barren spouse might



cover the incontinences of youth ; and exact observance of the honourable code of knighthood might cover the breach of primal law.

Ten years and more went over, and Arthur had no warning to read that penalties still were due. Then died King Pellinore at the hand of vengeance. Whether verily he slew King Lot in the battle or slew him not, he had the blame for his death, and he had the penalty ; he and not the prime offender. How he died, why he died, who were his death, never came to debate before Arthur ; still he cherished his sister's sons, and did not will to know.

More years passed, and then the doom of incest was put large before the King : Queen Morgause met her penalty, dying by the hand of her son Gaheris. So perished a fair hope ; for when Lamorak and Morgause were noised as great lovers, and Arthur found them well inclined to be wed, he had thought to see reconciled the sons of Pellinore and Lot. Vain was the hope ; for his own guilt clogged his authority when fiercely Gawaine stood between his mother and the son of one charged with the death of his father. So, too, when Gaheris, more fierce, made an end of their loves by the sword, King Arthur smote down his head, and left that crime also unpunished.

Once again vengeance passed him by, and the blood of Pellinore paid his debt ; for Lamorak died by murder, as his father before him. And again ; for Durnor died. " Oh, Lamorak, abide with me, and by my crown I shall never fail thee ! " In vain he promised : Lamorak would make no peace with the slayer of Morgause. He spoke for vengeance as a noble knight ; and he went his way alone, with his life in the keep of his sword. So he, too, perished, and Arthur failed to call any to account for that murder also.

For he, the greatest King in all the world, upright, noble, righteous, could rule nations wisely and well, and had learned to rule himself, but had no force to rule his sister's sons ; nay, very certainly at times he was ruled by them. Yet in this defect of Arthur the King, the heart of Arthur the man was proved noble in its weakness ; for his was no plight of fear and

distrust on account of past crime ; but instead, rare and wonderful spectacle, firm-set affection grew between him and these nephews, and namely Gawaine, while over all still lay the vague shadow of doom unfulfilled. And whenever these vindictive brothers with crime followed up the far-off death of Lot, though latent dread troubled the King, never did any personal apprehension cramp him down ; but his soul was daunted, seeing the wrong he had done not to be dead and gone, neither lived down nor redeemed.

Yet for thirty years immunity had been his, while hatred turned another way and spent itself. And now the blood bond was so firm, and the blood feud so spent, that well might Arthur come to think pardon might yet be to him without punishment in this world. Aglovale de Galis knew better : though he had made up his account to all appearance upon earth, the laws he had broken were the laws of God given to man, and sooner or later the hand of God would bring him to exact account. For the mercy of God He writes softly in the dark of each heart, but His justice He writes plain before man.

The waits upon the walls had cried an hour before he that spoke had made an end of that past. More he had to say, strange for a King to hear and a King's son to utter ; most strange from a fellow of the Round Table to his lord and head. The law of God, he said, required not the observance of honour, but honesty of man to man, and truth in the inward parts. But under the greatest King in Christendom truth was put down that honour might be established. Yea, in the annals of the Round Table there were instances enough, flagrant instances of honour established to the detriment of honesty ; for so dear to Arthur ever was this noble flourish of man's invention that he gave no keep to the plain foundation.

Yet the fairest chivalry of Christendom had lost integrity, not bereft of all guidance and warning. God Almighty of His grace set forth the Holy Quest that proved men in their understanding of right worship. Then was the appraisalment of man for honour turned to confusion, and pure integrity of life and thought alone found favour from on high. But few learned

by that teaching, and Arthur was not of these. In that Quest he took no part ; he deplored it, aware, though blind, that his surest and best were ill bestead to win sight of spiritual mysteries.

But now Arthur must needs learn ; for before him lay two ways, one way of honour, and one of honesty, dolorous both, and leading to shame and loss. By the way of honour lay no fair issue. Could he sleep on his bed defiled and call it sweet, were Launcelot so to answer for it with his great might. Were he so to choose, then might such noble custom and order as he had exalted stand, but to stand out as a ghastly mockery, revolting to scorn all the honest part of man : a rotten pretence indeed.

And no fair issue would he find by the way of honesty, but open dishonour and great loss, though the name of wittol he should purge away with blood and fire. Also that way he went to lose the better part of his knights of the Round Table, who would not abide by their lord and king when, by the rule and custom he himself had established, himself he would not abide.

So would the fellowship of the Round Table come to be broken and ended. And meet and just it was that Arthur must needs choose to keep his Queen or to lose his knights, seeing how in the beginning the Round Table came from King Leodegrance of Cameliard as dowry with his daughter Guenever.

Among all his knights, Arthur had none fit to stand for him against Launcelot, body to body in battle, his champion at this pass. Alas for the honour of Arthur that Lamorak was dead ! Yea, Pellinore's son Lamorak—he only might even now have won the judgment of God to delay final justice.

But Pellinore's son Aglovale had no force but to declare how the justice of God awaited Arthur to smite low his honour, and bring him as mere man to worship the law he had broken and overborne. Aglovale, the worst of Pellinore's sons, the worst knight that ever Arthur made, brought his dishonour to his lord to stead him at need.

Heavy against the King's knees he bowed, and his voice

was slow and weak as he took up another tale. Briefly he cited so much as fitted of his own life ; dispassionate, without complaint or excuse ; man to fellow-man. Without keep he stripped himself bare, as a swimmer going out to rescue in a heavy sea. With his fall to truth and dishonour he began, and he told of his vain endeavour to hold to the one and leave the other, and how he failed both ways, and how on through life by God and man he had been driven to truth and dishonour, even to this hour when God and man constrained him to fight against Launcelot and adultery.

Of what mercy he had found in God and man he told. Long and earnestly he spoke for encouragement ; said we do oppose and evade the mercy of God in our dread of His justice ; said His justice provides us surety and peace, for when we surrender ourselves, He gentle and generous enlarges us and maintains us ; said He enables us sinners to rest and be satisfied in our penalty as our share of worship to His honour and glory ; said Maker God writes His justice large before man, but His mercies He writes softly in the dark of each heart.

The waits upon the walls had cried another hour before that second tale was done. Upon Arthur's knees dragged a heavy weight, and a head lead-heavy lay against the edge of his sword. Long silence ensued.

Aglovale de Galis spoke no more to Arthur ever again ; but presently his voice lifted quietly, sentence after sentence, the best prayer formed for the need of man. Familiar rote swelled upon Arthur's ear, transformed and pregnant. Christ ! but the world rocked and the heavens rushed near. Christ, His word, smitten through and through for redemption and judgment !

Aglovale said "Amen," and waited. Though Arthur tried to join, even the Amen was too ponderous to lift.

Still Aglovale kneeled ; like a penitent awaiting absolution, meetly upon his knees he rested ; and he waited, and he waited his dismissal by word or deed.

At last King Arthur moved and spoke. He put down his

two hands upon Sir Aglovale's head and lifted it off his knees.

"Go!" said Arthur.

Weakly and stiffly Aglovale got upon his feet. He did not lift his eyes to look upon Arthur's face, but with bowed head turned, and went quietly as straight as he could to the door.

The King saw him depart, heard Kay challenge and pass him quite away. Then he groaned, "Amen, amen!" and beat out the light, and sat out the night with himself.



## CHAPTER XXVII

WHEN Sir Kay at day made bold to enter, King Arthur lifted a vacant stare.

“Who went out late?” he said.

Said Kay, “Only Sir Aglovale de Galis, like a foundered beast.”

“Like a foundered beast,” breathed Arthur, and fell to a black brooding.

Kay fretted and cursed low, came near and admonished with rough kindness.

“How now, Sir Arthur! Show me either the face of my King or the face of my breast-brother.”

Arthur spoke again low, “Listen, good breast-brother. I have heard tell there was a King to whom a dumb beast turned and spoke as a man.”

“Yea, so. I have forgot his name. Was it King David or Duke Joshua?”

“A great marvel! How went it? This way and that the beast crushed him, and also fell to its knees. And the one took out his sword, saying, ‘now will I slay.’ And the dumb beast opened speech, saying, ‘O fool, I have borne beating three times. O fool, look where you be going. Lo! the sword of God fronts every way.’”

“Surely that is Holy Writ.”

“So it was—a great marvel. O Kay! that foundered beast opened his mouth and spoke to confound me!”

Sir Kay gasped. Was this King Arthur emitting this poor breath? He stamped and swore in wrath and indignation.

"That prating beast!" he cried. "God rot that prating beast!"

The bells of Carlisle began to toll.

"Ah, God, but keep me my face!" prayed Arthur.

Early that morn, before the hour when the Queen should be brought to the fire, Gaheris and Gareth were at the Mass together, kneeling hard by the bier of Sir Agravaine. One came and kneeled behind them, who at the end rose as they did, and followed them down to the crypt, where the bed for interment lay wide.

"Sirs, give me leave to speak with one of you."

"To which of us two?"

"To whichever of you took part with Sir Agravaine in drowning a nobler knight than yourselves."

Gareth looked blank surprise at that bold answer, while Gaheris laughed out in savage scorn.

"At your own peril! A thick lie—yet at your own peril speak out."

"Sir, I come to you to amend my fault; for once in a manner I did lie to you. But not now."

"Fill up—I hear."

"I am he who guided you and Sir Agravaine, after you were delivered from most horrible death in the quag."

Sir Gaheris crossed himself soberly in remembrance.

"That was you! Well, oh, well—fain would I know—you lied then?"

"In a manner, yes."

"Concerning——? You vowed it was by miracle!"

"Sir, I did. Sir, I deceived you. I knew it was a living man who delivered you. Yet oh, sir, to me that was the miracle of it!"

"Who—who? Why did you lie? Who—tell me who?"

"He willed you should not know. He put out the light to escape from you in the dark. And seeing that, I came to beguile you."

"Who was he?"

"He willed you should not know."

"I will know—I must know."

"Sir, you shall not know with my will."

Sir Gaheris caught him by the sleeve and unsheathed his sword.

"Tell me his name."

Said Sir Gareth, "Be not hasty, brother. The young clerk does not ill in keeping trust."

"I take no keep for that! He owes me answer; he fooled and beguiled us falsely and impudently. But for him I had followed and known. And alas! we have sinned, presuming to say one came from Heaven to our aid. Yet I ever doubted. God pardon us! and namely Sir Agravaine dead."

Said Sir Gareth to Clerk Hew, "Consider now, may you not honour the deed above the word, and so speak to override an excess of humility; for the deed was marvellous great and good."

"It was—it was! and beyond all that you do conceive—almost beyond belief. For the love of God he did it wholly, and by the grace of God."

"His name!" cried Gaheris, passionately. "Give me his name! I will know. Here! I will afford you good enough excuse for breach of faith."

He touched the young clerk sharply on the neck with his blade. Gareth pulled down his hand.

Said he, "How were you charged? and why did you speak at all?"

"Sir, when I told what fooling I had done, he I will not name was ill pleased; and he bade me at first undeceive again if ever I might. But when I asked after your names he would not give them, and so had to set me excused from that order. And him he forbade me to name."

Said Gaheris, "Who then taught you to know, since he did not?"

"Sir Agravaine spoke to him, and I heard. God forgive him! he spoke hideously, dying as he was."

"Sir Agravaine knew!"

"Ah no, no! It was in ignorance—he did not know. Alas! he died and never knew!"



"Sir Agravaine — dying — spoke to him — to him — hideously——"

Gaheris loosed the young man and stood stock-still, revolving at all points the tangle of mystery. He turned to his brother; he was looking in his face for help; he was looking wild-eyed for rescue.

"Ah, my God!" he said, shuddered and choked, and his face grew deathly. Came, hardly above a whisper, "One thing more—tell me—only one. Tell me it was not Sir Aglovale."

Silence was answer enough.

"Ah, my God!" cried Gaheris, again. "Not he! Tell me it was not he—not that scab, Sir Aglovale."

At that Clerk Hew let go restraint; he bent his head, affirming with something of a flier.

"Oh, you lie!" cried Gaheris; "again you lie! Who stuffed you with this monstrous tale? Did he—Sir Aglovale? Own it all a lie, and I forgive. Own it, or I slay."

Gareth bade the young clerk go quickly for his life; by force he held back his brother.

"Wherefore such fury? Fair brother, tell me, for I am all lost and amazed. This is marvellous showing to Sir Aglovale."

"Ah, Gareth, Gareth, you do not know—not the half—it is past belief. Would to God it were not true! Yet for token that it is true, Sir Aglovale wants the use of his left hand, that was his better hand once. I—we—oh, Gareth—drowning—that was all but true. We did it—Agravaine and I—drowned him like a dog, with a stone at his neck."

"You did that to him who had saved you? God forgive it! Yet you did not know."

"God in heaven! But, brother, we did that, and then—then he saved us—that same night."

"Sir Aglovale! He did that for you who had drowned him like a dog, with a stone at his neck!"

"Gareth, Gareth, it was I that defaced him for all his days. He fought like a wild beast—we—all three—and so I did it. Yet that night he came and reached out his hand to me and

saved us perilously, all wounded as he was. Why did he do it? I am beaten out and out."

He was like a wild creature, stung and maddened by a barb working in deeper at every turn. He entered the grave, kneeled and took the earth with his hands.

"Agravaire has the better bed to lie in." He sprang up and away to stand above his dead brother and groan, "Oh, poor fool! Oh, poor fools are we all!"

After him went Gareth, and got him away out of the church, out of the city, and brought him to the quiet of field and sky, and by degrees took from him all the shameful story. Too noble a knight was Sir Gareth to stand in the counsels of his brothers who were all named murderers, yet for pity and for brotherhood he made no reproach to Gaheris in his misery.

"His silence knocks me!" cried Gaheris. "These years of silence—silence under all manner of despite. Face to face he might have spoken and broken us then and there—and he would not. God knows I was never so base but I would have published his worship to my own shame; but silence, silence for ever. His broken face, his useless hand—they do blast and crush the pattern of our knighthood of the Round Table.

"I cannot bear him. I hate him. I hate, I hate. God forgive me. I never hated him so before, but despised. Ah, Gareth, cry shame, but this is truth: I am torn asunder; I worship and I hate him with equal strength, and know that for any worship or hate of mine he cares nothing at all."

The bells of Carlisle began to toll, and the passion of Gaheris was chilled and overborne at the woeful signal calling them to witness the death of Queen Guenever.

Knights came riding afield to take their station about the mount where stack and stake stood up to view. In sombre fashion they came, with salutations grave and brief. Names were passed telling of default in their muster. There was no battle ardour at all; knights were stark and grim, looking for deadly work; but none were fain, and some lagged with bent

head, sad and silent, as half their heart and half their friends were against them with Launcelot.

Said one, "Alas! I deem Sir Palamides and Sir Safere are gone, for yonder comes their brother Sir Sagwarides alone and passing heavy."

Said another, "Sir Pertilope and Sir Perimones come, but I see not their best brother, Sir Persant of Inde. Howbeit, he would not for Sir Gareth's sake take any part against King Arthur."

No eye could perceive any sign of Launcelot. A silver mist hung low on the meadow; trees at the trunk stood dim that aloft swung golden against the blue.

Gaheris stood still at gaze and stiffened. "Lo! mine enemy."

Said Gareth, "Sooth and fie! He! Ought he to come against Sir Launcelot?"

"Ah, Gareth," said Gaheris, at hush, "I would lay down my life for hate of that dreadful man; and for to worship him well with my body."

He hung his head and sobbed some prayer to his breast. He lifted his head, and down the slope stalked softly as a young lion to the herd. After him went Gareth.

Three abreast came riding across the dewy turf, their faces still unbarred. Sir Tor and Sir Hermind rode on either side of Sir Aglovale. He bore himself erect, but he carried no spear, and his face was dewed with weakness, aged, and ghastly grey. He looked straight ahead, but the two beside gave to him many a careful glance, and so did Sir Griflet, who was following near.

Gaheris came down looking neither right nor left, stood the ground fronting Aglovale, and had him eye to eye. Very courteously and deliberately Gaheris gave him salutation. Aglovale paused a moment, then faintly gave him salutation again. Sir Tor and Sir Hermind also stopped short, greatly amazed, for they all knew how Sir Gaheris had never accorded salutation since that day of disgrace, when he had refused battle with Sir Aglovale for scorn.

Said Gaheris, "Sir Aglovale de Galis, I would have ado with you."

Said Aglovale, "Sir, in what manner?"

"Sir, in the manner of noble knights."

"Sir, to what intent?"

"Deadly, sir, deadly."

The solemn bells of Carlisle smote in upon suspense, for Sir Aglovale paused before he put the main question. Sir Gaheris was white with passion, and quivered like an eager war-horse. His noble brother Sir Gareth stood attentive near him, and gravely and steadily his clear eyes measured the two as they spoke.

Said Aglovale at last, "Sir, on what matter?"

"Sir Aglovale, on a matter you did in the dark and that shall see the light."

At that Aglovale sighed heavily, deeming he spoke under cover on resentment for the King his uncle. But Gaheris went on.

"In the presence of God above, and of four good knights, I do swear and declare that by you I have been poisoned. God's truth! you have poisoned me to death. Poison, poison! Aye, sir, do you stare in my face now, to see how it works? Look you! good knights and fellows, how it shows on this face of mine: on these members touched with palsy; yet you see not how it works in my veins, and gnaws at this heart of mine like a snake. And this, ah deed of darkness! this poison you gave me to receive in the body of my Saviour. In ghostly disguise yourself you gave, and I received and was thankful, not knowing. And so did Sir Agravaine, who died and never knew. As God is above, this is truth!"

"As God is above," said Aglovale, slowly, "I understand not what you say."

"Sir, you shall understand well enough to-morn. I will have my remedy of you, or one of us two shall die. I need a little morsel of your heart to saine me. God helping, I will get it; yea, and warm will I get it from you; so only can my torment cease from me in this life."

In vain did Aglovale search his meaning, it lay dark to him ; for he looked too near, so he got no light.

"Sir Gaheris," said Tor, then, "I would have you know Sir Aglovale is in no case to do battle to-morn, for pure weakness, albeit his heart is so great he bears arms to-day with us. Therefore for your own worship forbear your ado with him, and very heartily I will content you, and put you from your pains, and prove upon your body that you have spoken against him the most infamous and profane slander that ever knight uttered before God and man."

"Sir Gaheris," said Sir Hermind, "I am ready and fain to prove with my body that Sir Aglovale is more clean and clear from all villainy than are any of the sons of Lot."

"Sir Gaheris," said Sir Grifet, with his great voice, "you lie, and you know you lie. And that will I make so good upon your body that you shall lie still enough till Doomsday."

"Fair sirs," said Gaheris, "I have fewer fair witnesses than I thought, and more fair enemies. Well, I pray you all to be ready to renew this language before King Arthur to-morn, as I on my part will also. But I bid you consider you have yet to hear how Sir Aglovale will answer. And Sir Grifet namely I bid bethink him how he held such language to me once before, and how the debate was off my hands when Sir Aglovale answered for himself."

That old shame could still tint Aglovale's cheek a little. "Sir Gaheris," he said, "I will answer with my body if King Arthur approve the question. Yet this day there is overmuch danger and dread for any of us to reckon to meet on the morrow."

"Ah sir, but you shall not escape me. I promise you we shall meet. Though you were dead and damned, Sir Aglovale, I would go after you to Hell to get at your heart there."

The words, with the passion shaking them, took the hearers' breath ; and again upon silence the knell sounded clear. Gaheris swung to go, faltered, stepped near, and before Aglovale was aware, had him by the left hand and was handling it.

"Yet by this hand I swear," he said softly, and looked up with eyes that were humid, "by this hand I swear I think Hell will be an empty hole, if only God Almighty can be as greatly merciful as you, Sir Aglovale."

With that he went.

"God Almighty!" whispered Aglovale, enlightened, and rested stunned.

When Gareth overtook Gaheris he questioned, "In Heaven's name, fair brother, what are you about to do? And have you done well?"

"No. Spare to rebuke me, Gareth. No—no—rather ill; yet the best I could, God knows."

"Foul slander!"

"Right fair slander! Nay, true every word, and that he knows, or shall know."

"Open out your heart to me. Will you verily have him out to battle?"

"That I will. And I will overcome him; and I will have him at my mercy. And then—ah, Gareth, then before King and fellows, I will kneel and yield myself to him, and my sword into his hands."

"Good!" said Gareth. "And then?"

Gaheris wrung his hands. "Then, then he will forgive me my life openly!"

His voice broke in a sob, and his eyes sparkled wet.

"Put case he avenge openly and slay you?"

"Then—and well he may—I charge you suffer not Sir Gawaine to avenge my death. Ah, Gareth! ah, Gareth!"

"Good," said Gareth, again, "yea, such dealing is right fair and knightly." His own eyes grew moist, and he closed brotherly to say, "Sooth, Gaheris! you have got a little of that heart of his already. God grant you enough, and mend us all."

So they took thought for the morrow while the bells were knelling the day.

"God Almighty!" whispered Aglovale, again. "Hand of God!"

He quite forgot his fellows, and they hearing him breathe

the name of his Maker over and over again, bowed head devoutly and waited.

They had to call him to himself at last, and plainly from very far away he came. With a look of blank wonder he came, that never after quite left him, and at his death was sealed clear upon his visage.

Tor looked at him once. "Close your vizard, fair brother," he said gently. "It is meet we do so now."

So they cased up their faces and set on. High-headed went Aglovale, inhaling deeply, for he had wonderful thoughts; and those three true-hearted friends paced along, enduring his silence without question.

He remembered them, and said, "O good my brother and friends! I do thank you greatly for your goodwill."

"We have dealt in the dark," said Tor. "What meant Sir Gaheris by that he said?"

"That he said—hand of God!" muttered Aglovale; and again he was lost in his wonder, and again he remembered them.

"Bear with me, for Sir Gaheris has knocked hard to stunning; but he knew not what he said."

"He uttered a monstrous charge against you."

"Aye, so he did; and called me to battle. So he did; and right wittily and well."

"Have you come to understanding?"

"I understand him well enough. By this hand, yes! Yet what to think of him I know not. Take ye no thought for to-morrow. It may come, flush or dark, for my ending or my mending, according to the heart of Sir Gaheris. But to-morrow lies a great way off, for to-day we have to strike against Sir Launcelot."

He mused awhile, sighed, and shook his head. "It is no use, Sir Gaheris. It is no use at all."



## CHAPTER XXVIII

**A**LREADY the mount was crowned with a glittering circlet of knights, stationed at watch against all quarters. As yet no threat appeared. The countryside, smiling quiet and secretive through the shifting vapours, preserved suspense. For Carlisle that day was no blithe hour of morning vigour; no peaceful folk trod out and in. Behind the guarded gates the citizens seethed up to walls and housetops, to see the fairest of women brought out and burnt for her misdeeds.

She comes, and Launcelot does not come.

Like a Queen she came, with a great plump of spears before her and after her; and her ladies were there attendant, as when she went to church; and her damsels, bearing missal and cushion, pomander and mirror. They were lamenting aloud, but she made no moan. With unaltered dignity treading the way to shameful death; with sad, wan beauty, drawn brows and distracted gaze, the splendid piteous creature commanded admiration and compassion, maugre all her guilt.

To the mount she comes and stands, and Launcelot does not come.

Many beside unhappy Guenever turned about then and looked out over the silver swathes of the lowland, where gleamed no promise of help: nothing more urgent stirred than wild-fowl, mewing and honking and winging up black from the water-beds.

Then was the Queen made ready for the fire. Disrobed, ungirt, the tiar lifted away, gown and kirtle taken off, she stood clad only in her last garment, and the fair gold stole of her own hair pendant to the knee.



Then she kissed five of her weeping ladies, and gently she dismissed all from further service. Then she summoned ghostly aid, and kneeling down on a cushion was shriven by a holy man. It shocked the heart to see as she kneeled there, so thin-clad in the morning air, how slight shivers of cold took that poor body that was going straight into fire. Men were seen weeping then. Gaheris and Gareth wept, and many others, unwilling witnesses with them; and doubtless behind steel bars many eyes were half-blind just then.

Here is Guenever brought to the stake, and where is Launcelot?

Up into air went a falcon with gilded jesses that took the sun as they trailed.

She lifted her face to the skies. Her brows smoothed; like a saint near her peace, calm and confidence transformed her countenance; lightly she set foot on the stack of beach and pine, and stood high by the stake against the sky.

Ha havoc! the wild-fowl are all stilled. Clink and clang take the ear; away in the hollows sparks of light take the eye—broadening, dancing; riding the mist crests of knights unveil, fronts of horses, a mat of spears; out of the mist, reft by the wind of speed, without trump, without call, with lightning to the air, with thunder to the sod, with a weft of rainbow from thick spinning dew, come the grandest fighters in the world—comes Launcelot.

Down went the spears upon the mount. Grim and sober Arthur's knights formed out to battle-front, and wisely and orderly waited to take full advantage of their ground.

"Are you mad, Sir Aglovale?" cried Griflet, then. "Keep back and forbear the spears, as you bear none."

He spoke in vain. Soon as the slope told against the onrush, down charged the opposing ranks, and down with the rest charged Sir Aglovale.

"He is mad! he is mad!" cried Gaheris, in a frenzy above. "Ah, God keep Sir Aglovale for me this day!"

Fleet-foot he ran and sprang like a roe, and reached a jetty of broom to espy nearer. After him came Gareth.

At mid ascent broke the shock of spears, crackle of wood loud as the rattle of mail. The downpress had the advantage : near a third of Launcelot's party were cast from the saddle, or horse and man went down together. Launcelot and his brethren bore through the first rank. There fell Sir Hermind : smitten by Launcelot clean through the body he dropped dead. There fell Sir Aglovale. Sir Bors thrust him down, and he lay stunned. Sir Gaheris spied that, and wrung his hands.

Now the battle was with swords ; horsed and unhorsed fought in confusion ; the scream of horses rose, for knights afoot stabbed ruthless to revenge their disadvantage. On Sir Aglovale, as he rose, down rolled a slaughtered beast.

Sir Gareth beheld his brother suddenly start from his cover and reckless speed into the fray. Without thought he followed. Between them they released Sir Aglovale from the weight that was killing him, and got him up to an empty saddle. He blessed them unaware without recognition, while Gaheris for his part cursed him heartily.

Where the battle raged on higher ground he rode hastily, and the two brothers followed perforce ; hemmed in on either side, the press carried them along.

Close below the brow a knot on horseback lashed together furiously ; for here was Launcelot, strong as a wild boar tossing hounds. Then fell Sir Griflet, gashed deadly deep. Aglovale saw him fall as he spurred past to take the ground above. Alas ! this horse that was under him was Sir Tor's.

Swift and terrible were the strokes of Launcelot. Two strokes, two deadly, unhappy strokes he dealt, and knew not what he did. One Gaheris saw, and shrieked as his brother Gareth, smitten through the brows, fell back dead into his arms ; the next he saw not : with hardly a moan he also dropped out of life.

Gallant knights both were they, though one was savage and a murderer, and had slain his mother ; they were pleasant and witty to hear, and very goodly to see in visage and stature ; they were staunch-minded, for Gareth never forgot kindness, and Gaheris never forgot injury ; they were courteous

to all ladies, and loyal lovers of their two fair wives, Linet and Lioness; they worshipped Launcelot, and loved him passing well, and namely Sir Gareth; and Launcelot loved them again, and namely Sir Gareth, passing well.

Launcelot passed on unaware; but behind him the eddy of battle paused, and knights of both parties stayed their strokes, and looked, the shriek of Gaheris at their hearts, on those two brained dead.

"Alas!" said young Lavaine, "alas! Sir Launcelot. Though God Almighty forgive this, he will never forgive himself, nor neither will Sir Gawaine."

By this Sir Launcelot had all but won the ascent. Last to oppose him hurled a knight who had slung aside his shield to grip his sword by both hands. Recklessly exposed he swung up for the stroke, with the weight of a plunge he swung down: his blade met Launcelot's and broke. He laughed out like a madman, and flung away the shard. Their horses were staggering at impact when quick Launcelot struck again; but the other dipped, swerved close in under the blow, and leaning from the saddle clapped both arms upon Launcelot: his right caught him about the girdle, his left took him beneath the chin. It was the trick of Sir Turquine that had unseated many a strong knight. In vain he heaved with all his strength; Launcelot swayed a little, recovered, but could not shake him off, and could not strike. He drew back his arm, felt with the sword-point for the unjointed spot below the armpit, and drove in the blade deep. With a groan Aglovale slid down and dropped to die. He had got his death from Launcelot.

Queen Guenever's smock is stained with blood as Launcelot lifts her away from the stake, and she laughs for joy that it is not his.

Up from the finished battle came others: came Ector, Bors, Blamore, Bleoberis, Lavaine, Palamides; and again the mount was crowned with a glittering circlet, while away to Carlisle streamed tidings of defeat to Arthur, while Guenever kneeled devoutly to thank Heaven for her deliverance, while she was clad hastily and set upon horse behind Launcelot.

Then straight all fell bare. Down past the slope of blood the slayers rode, and fast away across the shining land, by east to Eden river, and by north to Joyous Gard.

Death made no haste with Sir Aglovale; he had yet an hour to live. The first he knew beyond pain when he lifted and sat, was the pleasant smell of bruised thyme, and there beneath his hand a little patch of dim blue. It rooted far away on Wenlock Edge. He shifted a little lest it should be stained, and against his left side shut tight his arm to keep in red life. Along Wenlock Edge came Nacien, saying, 'God has been gracious, O my son.' And he perverse,—'I will not go!' He lost his way.

Next he knew that above him stack and stake stood up to view solitary, and the world was very quiet, albeit the groans of wounded men came from below. Clear and small swam the falling-in of knells. Clear and small and far away on rising ground moved points of light in a soft glitter.—God keep you, Sir Launcelot, body alive to a better life!—The world smiled fair as the sun drew up the dews. He lost his way again.

Death made no haste with Sir Tor. He shifted, and moved, and crept along to dead and dying. Sir Hermind dead, Sir Perimones dead, Sir Kay l'Estrange dead. Sir Sagwarides dying. Oh, mercy! Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth both dead. The elder still clasped his brother. Beside the armed dead, those two, unarmed, represented a piteous mischance. Sir Sagwarides had seen, and he told how it was done.

One heard, stood up on his feet staggering, came and looked.

"Sir Griffet! God be thanked, you live."

"Alas! I am but slain."

"And I," said Tor. "Where is Sir Aglovale?"

"I know not; only I am sure he has not fled."

Together they went on further search, till higher beyond the rest they found him.

They knew he was near his end, because he sat so still. His head was erect and rigid, his right hand was idling to and fro softly upon the turf; his harness was unbroken, and

but little blood showed upon it, yet they knew without a word that he was near his end.

Sir Griflet went forward and dropped with a groan at his side. He turned his head, and crept out his right hand to him, but did not stir otherwise. After came Tor as fast as he could drag, and kneeling he put his great hands lightly upon Aglovale.

"Fair dear brother," he sobbed, "I shall die the better by you."

At that Aglovale lifted a look, and rested his wondering spirit with a giving of love and worship to his faithful brother.

"God Almighty bless——"

Blood rose to his lips when he spoke, and pain took him hard upon death when he lifted a hand. They eased him of his helm, and propped him; and they saw well he was nearer his end than either of them, though their wounds gaped, and his they had not seen. Griflet was hewn deep at the shoulder, and Tor at the belt. Aglovale's mortal wound let out only a thread of blood, that ran continuously, dark and warm, blurring his harness like breath.

There below good Christian folk were coming to take up dead and wounded, and to ease the dying, body and soul. Sir Griflet lifted a prayer that they might not die till ghostly comfort came, so they might receive their Saviour before they passed over to death and judgment. Namely he prayed for Sir Aglovale, for he thought him almost gone: without breath he seemed, and his eyes were fixed far off.

Far off he had lost his way. He saw an elder-tree and sodden ground and driving rain: then said Brose, 'Kiss of peace,' and died unhoucelled. Lo! a rainbow arching up into clear sky. The words of Gaheris drifted him back into time present: 'If God can be so greatly merciful as you.' Wonder was set afresh upon his face. "O Maker of man," he breathed in worshipping appeal.

He looked upon Griflet and Tor, and seeing their pains were greater than his own, forbore request. But straightway Tor bent to him.

"Brother, what would you have of me?"

He whispered faintly, "Sir Gaheris. Could he know he would come to me now."

They were dumb-struck, and looked at each other, awed and marvelling.

Then said Griflet, "Alas! Sir Aglovale, you may go to him, but he cannot come to you. Sir Gaheris is dead."

For a moment he did not stir; then he lifted a sigh and said aloud, "God rest his soul." At that a rush of blood choked him.

Even to men who were dying it was fearful to see then how he set himself to preserve the tag of life in his body; he might not speak out, he might not lift a hand; passively with all his will he withstood the thrusts for release, and held possession. Presently Tor, in answer to a sign, told over what he had seen, and what he had heard, of the death of that brave pair.

"Beyond the gorse there they lie together. How they came in the thick of battle passes knowing; but myself I saw Sir Gaheris: hastily he came and took away my horse when I was down."

Then Aglovale knew, and they saw he knew, and held still to hear his whisper.

"For me—he came in to deliver me—brought me your horse—he and Sir Gareth—I saw, not seeing—now I see."

Amazed beyond words, Tor and Griflet waited, and in vain, to learn the secret of this devoted enemy. They did but hear a faint whisper that ran, "Eh, Sir Gaheris, Sir Gaheris, it is all one!"

Said Tor, "And I meant to kill him except he sued to live through Sir Aglovale."

Said Griflet, "And I meant to kill him without question."

Aglovale only shook his head and very faintly smiled. And they saw that God had taken the ending and the mending of the matter into His own hands, and that the solving of the matter would not be till Doomsday.

Then ensued silence. The isolation of death pressed hard

between them, and the separate anguish of the flesh clogged each one in himself. Tor drew the nearer, and kept his hand on his brother as other dear affections cried his heart away from him.

Before long charitable aid reached that high-tide mark of blood. The first that came was a nimble young squire, bearing a helmet full of clear water. Tor drank, and Griflet drank; Aglovale tried to drink but could not; the sip he swallowed he lost with more blood; almost he lost his life then and there.

Far gone he stayed his thirst on a night moonstruck and dewy, when out of shadows Divine approval came upon him once. He had lost his way again and wandered.

'This I cannot abide,' said Gaheris, and plucked him from dear contrition hastily to death.

'Ah, friend,' said Gaheris, 'I am sorry. I knew not how hard I used you.'

'You have poisoned me to death,' said Gaheris, 'in the body of my Saviour.'

'I think Hell will be an empty hole,' said Gaheris.

He drank at wonder, and could not retain it, and was thirsting still.

Tor was bathing his face with water. "Stay with us, Sir Aglovale," said Griflet, "for comfort is at hand. So presently may we three together be assoiled of our sins, and houselled freshly to our end."

The serviceable young man had done what he could to ease them, and now was gone to the suffragan of Carlisle, whom bearing the Host they saw, coming to bless the dying on the battle-ground. Then he sent forward one of his company, and himself followed by degrees as fast as he was able, for others there were to be satisfied by the way.

The next that came was nimble and young, even Clerk Hew. Sorrow of heart was his and dread to see whom he was required to shrive for death; but the grace of holy orders exalted his spirit above the natural man, and he used no words but to do his ghostly service. Sir Griflet and Sir Tor in turn

kneeled, confessed, and were shriven clean; and then Clerk Hew came and kneeled by Sir Aglovale and leaned close to hear. That confession was the shortest, but it took more time than both of theirs.

Faintly he whispered, "I have sinned." Then came silence, and again after each particular came silence. "Pride—Presumption—Arrogance—Cowardice—Railing—Hardness of heart—Unbelief. God knows I am sorry."

With that came such a rush of blood that quickly Clerk Hew blessed him to God, deeming the end had come. The spasm passed, and presently Tor said, "He would say more to us. Take you his words for us."

So Clerk Hew leaned down again, and repeated the disjointed whisper as it came.

"One of you—for charity—when I am dead—dig out of me—some morsel of my heart—and let Sir Gaheris have it—for peace in the grave."

Sir Griflet was the first to make answer. He said huskily, "Sir, so help me God that my life endure, I will serve you faithfully for this."

Clerk Hew was pale and shaking as he answered next, "Sir, I will not fail to further your desire. So help me God."

But Tor moaned pitifully, "Ah, fair dear brother, I cannot. Too jealous dear to me is this your body. Content you that I will not hinder."

Now came towards them the aged suffragan of Carlisle as fast as he could go with reverence to That he carried in his hands. When he came to a stand Tor and Griflet shifted to kneel, but Aglovale might not stir; he could but lift up his eyes to the vessel in worship.

The holy man looked upon him steadfastly. Eye to eye they met, and there was remembrance between them of the woeful hour beneath the elder-tree where Brose died denied Christian rites. Alas! as Clerk Hew knew, Sir Aglovale also must be denied comfort. Himself he knew it: tears stood in his eyes, he shook his head slightly; his lips moved, and the young clerk leaned close and gave out aloud his whisper.



"Sir, alas! I am too full of my own blood. I may not receive my Saviour."

"Alas!" said Tor, "Alas!" said Griflet. Even he, that good hard old Christian was deeply moved, and his voice was broken as he bade him touch what he might not take.

So Aglovale kissed the blessed Bread, and then he shifted ever so little and leaned down his face to cover while his two fellows received their Saviour. Then the holy man blessed them with the blessing of God's peace and passed on.

"Christ! he is going now," said Griflet; for lo! Aglovale's left arm was hanging free, and fast his life was racing out on a dark and smoking stream. He could no longer hold up against the drag of death; Tor caught him and lowered him back carefully. He gained ease and speech, but he could no longer see, and he put out a hand vacantly.

"Where is brother Sir Tor?"

"Here I hold you."

"Kiss me, Tor."

Brotherly they kissed together and they kept hands fast to the end.

Then said Aglovale, "Thanks be to God for my good brothers, who have blessed this life of mine. Thanks be for Tor, for Lamorak, for Durnor, for Percivale, four dear brothers, and namely for Percivale."

He rested quiet, but his eyes were wide and intent, though he could not see.

Then he said, "Ah, Jesu God." Then he said, "Ah, Lord, your sorry servant!" and sighed heavily once.

"God rest his soul," said Clerk Hew, softly, and bowed down. The two dying men looked close on the still visage between them, and then said, "Amen." Tor laid his hand across the eyes, fixed wide upon the skies in dead amazement, and shut them down. It was not in them to sorrow over the mortal part of Aglovale; only a little quiet contemplation they gave to the indifferent aspect so soon to ensue to their own bodies.

Presently in morne silence Clerk Hew rose up and looked

at Sir Griflet, who looked at Sir Tor, who bowed his head and clasped hard the chill hand he held. They loosed the dead man's girdle, and his harness, plates and rings, discovering the narrow wound. Leathern vest they stripped open, and linen shirt. Underneath was the haire very worn and frayed; and that they slit apart. Then breast and side lay bare, and Griflet drew in a sob. Way to the heart lay open wide already.

"So help me God!" said Griflet. He touched, and came upon a shred of iron lodged close against the still heart. Forth he drew it.

All reverently knight and clerk did according to promise. As he were handling a holy relic the first performed his part, and the other in like manner took, and went to find dead Gaheris.

On the field he sought and could not find him, for Arthur had commanded extreme haste in the burial. In the crypt of Carlisle church, in the unclosed grave, there he found him. And in the bed of earth, as secretly as he might he gave, and so had Gaheris even what he besought for his peace in the grave.

Yet one did partly espy and called him to account. "O son, O wretch, what deed is that you did? Have you laid the blessed Bread in soulless clay!"

He kneeled down weeping. "By my soul, I have done no wickedness. This sacrament that I gave is not the very Body of our Lord. I will answer to God for what I have done when the dead arise."

Sir Griflet and Sir Tor were also dead when Sir Kay came over the battlefield to number the dead and to make order for interment. Others were with him: Sir Persant of Inde and Sir Lucan, gentle knights; and goodly lament these uttered for the death of Sir Tor and Sir Griflet, and goodly they praised them as noble knights. On Sir Aglovale for gentleness they forbore to speak at all. Even Sir Kay held his peace, till looking narrowly, he discovered the haire.

"Well, well!" said Kay.

Gaheris and Gareth were laid in grave before ever King

Arthur lifted head to go further than that particular loss; for sorrow for his nephews had taken him hard even to swooning. Of twenty-four slain these only had been named, and so he took up question on living and dead.

Came his first word: "Sir Aglovale de Galis? What of him?"

"Sir Aglovale is dead."

At that the King breathed a deep breath that was no sigh. "Well, well!" said Arthur.

Here is the end of the story of Aglovale. From beginning to end I have given it, to the best of my power, as I found it. I ask good man or woman who has taken and read it all to spend a moment now on a due that is owing: Pray for the soul of Sir Thomas Malory, knight, my most dear Master whom I love so much.



## NOTES FROM "MORTE DARTHUR" (ABRIDGED)

### CHAPTER I

*P. 3. On the first day of knighthood.*

So, at the desire of Griflet the king made him knight. Now, said Arthur, since I have made you knight, thou shalt promise me by the faith of thy body, when thou hast justed with the knight at the fountain, whether it fall that ye be on foot or on horseback, that right so ye shall come again unto me without making any more debate. Then took Griflet his horse in great haste and rode a great wallop till he came to the fountain, and the knight came out of the pavilion. I will just with you, said Griflet. It is better ye do not, said the knight, for ye are but young and late made knight, and your might is nothing to mine. As for that, said Griflet, I will just with you. That is me loth, said the knight, but since I must needs, I will dress me thereto. So the two knights ran together, that Griflet's spear all toshivered, and therewithal he smote Griflet through the shield and the left side, and brake the spear, that the truncheon stack in his body, that knight and horse fell down.

When the knight saw him lie so on the ground he alighted, and was passing heavy, for he wend he had slain him, and then he unlaced his helm and gat him wind, and so with the truncheon he set him on his horse and gat him wind, and so betook him to God, and said he had a mighty heart, and if he might live he would prove a passing good knight. And so Sir Griflet rode to the court, where great dole was made for him. But through good leeches he was healed and saved. (Book 1, chs. 20, 21).

*P. 4. His new-found son Tor.*

Forthwithal there came a poor man into the court, and brought

with him a fair young man, eighteen year of age, riding upon a lean mare. Anon he came before the king, saluted him, and said, O King Arthur, it was told me that at this time of your marriage ye would give any man the gift that he would ask out, except that were unreasonable. That is truth, said the king, so it impair not my realm nor mine estate. Said the poor man, Sir, I ask nothing else but that ye will make my son here a knight. It is a great thing that thou askest of me : what is thy name? said the king. Sir, my name is Aries the cowherd. Whether cometh this, of thee or of thy son? said the king. Nay, sir, said Aries, this desire cometh of my son, and not of me. For I shall tell you I have thirteen sons, and all they will fall to what labour I put them to, but this child will do no labour for me, for anything that my wife or I may do, but always he will be shooting or casting darts, and glad for to see battles and to behold knights ; and always day and night he desireth of me to be made a knight. What is thy name? said the king unto the young man. Sir, my name is Tor. Well, said King Arthur to Aries, fetch all thy sons afore me that I may see them. And so the poor man did, and all were shapen much like the poor man, but Tor was not like none of them all in shape nor in countenance. Now, said King Arthur, where is the sword that he shall be made knight withal? It is here, said Tor, and pulled out his sword, kneeling and requiring the king that he would make him a knight, and that he might be a knight of the Table Round. As for a knight I will make you ; and therewith smote him in the neck with the sword, saying, Be ye a good knight, and so I pray to God so ye may be, and if ye be of prowess and of worthiness ye shall be a knight of the Table Round. Now, Merlin, said Arthur, say whether this Tor shall be a good knight or no. Yea, sir, he ought to be a good knight, for he is come of as good a man as any is on live. This poor man Aries the cowherd is not his father, for King Pellinore is his father. I suppose nay, said the cowherd. Fetch thy wife afore me, said Merlin, and she shall not say nay. Anon the wife was fetched, which was a full fair house-wife, and there she answered Merlin full womanly. And she told that when she was a maid and went to milk kine, there met with me a stern knight, and half by force he held me, and after that time was born my son Tor, and he took away from me my greyhound that I had that time with me, and said that he would keep the greyhound for my love. Ah, said the cowherd, I wend not this, but I may

believe it well for he had never no taches of me. Sir, said Tor to Merlin, dishonour not my mother. Sir, said Merlin, it is more for your worship than hurt, for your father is a good man and a king, and he may right well advance you and your mother, for ye were begotten or ever she was wedded. That is truth, said the wife. It is the less grief to me, said the cowherd.

So on the morn King Pellinore came to the court of King Arthur, which had great joy of him, and told him of Tor, how he was his son, and how he had made him knight at the request of the cowherd. When King Pellinore beheld Tor he pleased him much (Book 3, chs. 3, 4).

P. 4. *When Danes and Irish landed* (Book 4, chs. 3, 4).

P. 7. *Blood feud was unfinished.*

Gawaine in great envy told Gaheris his brother, Yonder knight [King Pellinore] is put to great worship, the which grieveth me sore, for he slew our father King Lot, therefore I will slay him, said Gawaine, with a sword that was sent me that is passing trenchant. Ye shall not so, said Gaheris, at this time; for at this time I am but a squire, and when I am made knight I will be avenged on him; and therefore, brother, it is best ye suffer till another time, that we may have him out of the court, for and we did so we should trouble this high feast. I will well, said Gawaine, as you will (Book 3, ch. 4).

P. 8. *For the oath she had imposed.*

Then the king and the queen were greatly displeased with Sir Gawaine for the slaying of the lady. And then by ordinance of the queen there was set a quest of ladies on Sir Gawaine, and they judged him for ever while he lived to be with all ladies, and to fight for their quarrels; and that ever he should be courteous, and never to refuse mercy to him that asketh mercy. Thus was Gawaine sworn upon the four Evangelists (Book 3, ch. 8).

*Ibid. To rape and treason* (Book 19).

*Ibid. Fairness of Pellinore.*

Now, said King Pellinore, I shall put to you two knights, and ye shall choose which is most worthy, that is Sir Bagdemagus, and Sir Tor my son. But because Sir Tor is my son, I may not praise him, but else, and he were not my son, I durst say that of his age there is not in this land a better knight than he is, nor of better conditions, and loth to do any wrong and loth to take any wrong. By my head, said Arthur, he is a passing good knight as any

ye spake of this day, for I have seen him proved, but he saith little and he doth much more, for I know none in all this court, and he were as well born on his mother's side as he is on your side, that is like him of prowess and of might; and therefore I will have him at this time, and leave Sir Bagdemagus till another time. So they were chosen, whereof Sir Bagdemagus was wonderly wroth, that Sir Tor was advanced afore him, and therefore suddenly he departed from the court (Book 4, ch. 5).

## CHAPTER II

P. 10. *Sir Launcelot came to make an end* (Book 6, chs. 7-10).

P. 13. *The great war with Rome* (Book 5).

P. 19. *Kept not strictly to the order of events.*

This is evident by the names of Sir Turquine, Sir Tristram, and Sir Percivale (Book 7, ch. 28); whereas Sir Tristram was not knighted before the death of Turquine and the release of Sir Marhaus (Book 6, ch. 9; Book 8, ch. 5), and Percivale not before Tristram was made knight of the Round Table (Book 10, ch. 23).

*Ibid.* *The proving of Arthur's young nephew Gareth* (Book 7, ch. 26).

*Ibid.* *Aglovale and Durnor overthrown* (Book 10, ch. 48).

## CHAPTER III

P. 26. *The ways of Sir Turquine.*

There came three knights, riding as fast fleeing as ever they might ride. And there followed them three but one knight. So within a while this strong knight had overtaken one of these knights, and then he smote him to the cold earth that he lay still. And then he rode unto the second knight, and smote him so that man and horse fell down. And then straight to the third knight he rode, and he smote him behind his horse tail a spear's length. And then he alight down, and reined his horse on the bridle, and bound all the three knights fast with the reins of their own bridles. When Sir Lionel saw him do this he thought to assay him. And when he was mounted upon his horse he overtook this strong knight and bad him turn: and the other smote Sir Lionel so hard that horse and man he bare to the earth, and so he alight down and bound him fast, and threw him overthwart his own horse, and so he served them all four, and rode with them away to his own

castle. And when he came there, he made unarm them, and beat them with thorns all naked, and after put them in a deep prison, where there were many more knights that made great dolour (Book 6, ch. 1).

## CHAPTER IV

- P. 30. *Sir Turquine* (Book 6, chs. 8, 9).  
 P. 35. *Sir Launcelot came back* (Book 6, ch. 18).  
 P. 37. *Gawaine by fraud and unfaith* (Book 4, chs. 21, 22).  
 P. 42. *How I rescued you from Carados* (Book 8, ch. 28).

## CHAPTER V

P. 48. *Your birthright goes from you.*

Sir Tor, which was King Pellinore's first son, and Sir Aglovale was his next son; Sir Lamorak Dornor Percivale these were his sons too (Book 10, ch. 23). Sir, ye shall understand my name is Sir Lamorak de Galis, son and heir unto the good knight and king, King Pellinore; and Sir Tor the good knight is my half-brother (Book 10, ch. 19).

## CHAPTER VI

P. 52. *The Questing Beast* (Book 1, ch. 17).

*Ibid. The Fair Head.*

Anon Pellinore rode toward Camelot, and came by the well there as the wounded knight was and the lady, there he found the knight, and the lady eaten with lions or wild beasts all save the head, wherefore he made great sorrow, and wept passing sore, and said, Alas! her life might I have saved, but I was so fierce in my quest, therefore, I would not abide. I wot not, said Pellinore, but my heart mourneth sore for the death of her, for she was a passing fair lady and a young. . . Truly, said Merlin, ye ought so to repent it, for the lady was your own daughter, and that knight that was dead was her love and should have wedded her, and she for great sorrow and dole slew herself with his sword, and her name was Eleine. And because ye would not abide and help her, ye shall see your best friend fail you when ye be in



the greatest distress that ever ye were or shall be. And that penance God has ordained you for that deed, that he that ye shall most trust to of any man alive, he shall leave you there as ye shall be slain. Me forthinketh, said King Pellinore, that this shall betide, but God may well fordo destiny (Book 3, chs. 14, 15).

P. 52. *Gawaine and his brethren to avenge* (Book 2, ch. 10).

#### CHAPTER VII

P. 64. *His ending of the wicked Annowre* (Book 9, ch. 16).

*Ibid. His encounter unknown with Lamorak* (Book 9, ch. 14).

P. 67. *Sir Hermind* (Book 10, chs. 61-63).

P. 69. *To face King Arthur*.

There came to the court a knight, with a young squire with him ; and when this knight was unarmed, he went to the king, and required him to make the young squire a knight. Of what lineage is he come? said King Arthur. Sir, said the knight, he is the son of King Pellinore, that did you sometime good service, and he is brother unto Lamorak de Galis, the good knight. Well, said the king, for what cause desire ye that of me that I should make him knight? Wot you well, my lord the king, that this young squire is brother to me as well as to Sir Lamorak, and my name is Aglovale. Sir Aglovale, said Arthur, for the love of Sir Lamorak, and for his father's love, he shall be made knight to-morrow. Now tell me, said Arthur, what is his name? Sir, said the knight, his name is Percivale de Galis.

So on the morn the king made him knight in Camelot. But the king and all the knights thought it would be long or that he proved a good knight. Then at the dinner, when the king was set at the table, and every knight after he was of prowess, the king commanded him to be set among mean knights ; and so was Percivale set as the king commanded. There was there a maiden in the queen's court that was come of high blood ; and she was dumb and never spake word. Right so she came straight into the hall, and went unto Sir Percivale, and took him by the hand and said aloud, that the king and all the knights might hear it, Arise, Sir Percivale, the noble knight and God's knight, and go with me ; and so he did. And then she brought him to the right side of the siege-perilous, and said, Fair knight, take here thy siege, for that siege appertaineth to thee and to none other. Right so she

departed and asked a priest. And as she was confessed and houselled ; then she died. Then the king and all the court made great joy of Sir Percivale (Book 10, ch. 23).

P. 74. *They had counselled and agreed* (Book 10, ch. 21).

*Ibid. Let us send and fetch our mother* (Book 10, ch. 24).

P. 75. *Sir Percivale went into Cornwall* (Book 10, ch. 51).

*Ibid. After his nephew Tristram had saved him from his enemies* (Book 10, chs. 28-30).

*Ibid. Broke the faith he had sworn on a book* (Book 10, ch. 22).

*Ibid. Made away with him* (Book 10, ch. 50).

*Ibid. The luring of Lamorak.*

Sir Gawaine and his brethren sent for their mother there besides fast by a castle beside Camelot ; and all was to that intent to slay Sir Lamorak. The queen of Orkney was there but a while, but Sir Lamorak wist of her being, and was full fain ; and for to make an end of this matter he sent unto her, and then betwixt them was a time assigned that Sir Lamorak should come to her. Thereof was ware Sir Gaheris, and there he rode afore, the same time, and waited upon Sir Lamorak. And then he saw where he came all armed ; and where Sir Lamorak alight, he tied his horse to a privy postern, and so he went into a parlour and unarmed him ; and then he went unto the queen, and she made of him passing great joy, and he of her again, for either loved other passing sore. So when the knight, Sir Gaheris, saw his time, he came unto them all armed, with his sword naked, and suddenly gat his mother by the hair, and strake off her head. When Sir Lamorak saw the blood dash upon him all hot, the which he loved passing well, wit you well he was sore abashed and dismayed of that dolorous knight. And therewithal Sir Lamorak leaped up as a knight dismayed, saying thus : Ah, Sir Gaheris, knight of the Table Round, foul and evil have ye done, and to you great shame. Alas, why have ye slain your mother that bare you ; with more right ye should have slain me. The offence hast thou done, said Gaheris, notwithstanding a man is born to offer his service, but yet shouldest thou beware with whom thou meddlest, for thou hast put me and my brethren to a shame, and thy father slew our father ; and for thou to love our mother is too much shame for us to suffer. And as for thy father King Pellinore, my brother Sir Gawaine and I slew him. Ye did him the more

wrong, said Sir Lamorak, for my father slew not your father ; it was Balan le Savage ; and as yet my father's death is not revenged. Leave those words, said Gaheris, for and thou speak feloniously I will slay thee, but because thou art unarmed I am ashamed to slay thee. But wit thou will in what place I may get thee I shall slay thee ; and now my mother is quit of thee ; and therefore withdraw thee and take thine armour, that thou were gone. Sir Lamorak saw there was none other boot, but fast armed him and took his horse, and rode his way making great sorrow. Wit ye well, Sir Gawaine was wroth that Gaheris had slain his mother and let Sir Lamorak escape (Book 10, ch. 24).

P. 76. *Promised to love him* (Book 10, ch. 19).

*Ibid.* *He encountered the sons of Lot* (Book 10, ch. 21).

*Ibid.* *His last tournament* (Book 10, chs. 44, 45).

*Ibid.* *For the sake of Arthur he revenged.*

Sir, said Lamorak, wit you well I owe you my service : but as at this time I will not abide here, for I see of mine enemies many about me. Alas, said Arthur, now wot I well it is Sir Lamorak de Galis. O, Lamorak, abide with me, and by my crown I shall never fail thee : and not so hardy in Gawaine's head, nor none of his brethren to do thee wrong. Sir, said Lamorak, wrong have they done me and to you both. That is truth, said King Arthur, for they slew their own mother and my sister, which me sore grieveth. It had been much fairer and better that ye had wedded her, for ye are a king's son as well as they. Truly, said the noble knight Sir Lamorak unto Arthur, her death will I never forget ; I promise you, and make mine avow I shall avenge her death as soon as I see time convenient. And if it were not at the reverence of your highness, I should now have been revenged upon Sir Gawaine and his brethren. Truly, said Arthur, I will make you at accord. Sir, said Lamorak, as at this time I may not abide with you (Book 10, ch. 46).

*Ibid.* *How he parted from Launcelot.*

Sir Lamorak would not go with them. I will undertake, said Sir Launcelot, that and ye will go with us, King Arthur shall charge Sir Gawaine and his brethren never to do you hurt. As for that, said Sir Lamorak, I will not trust Sir Gawaine nor none of his brethren ; and wit ye well, Sir Launcelot, and it were not for my lord King Arthur's sake, I should match Sir Gawaine and his brethren well enough. But to say that I should trust them, that



shall I never. And, sir, it is but late that I revenged that when my lord Arthur's kin were put to the worse by Sir Palamides. Then Sir Lamorak departed from Sir Launcelot, and either wept at their departing (Book 10, ch. 49).

P. 76. *That foul battle.*

Sir, said Gareth, well I understand the vengeance of my brethren, Sir Gawaine, Sir Agravaine, Gaheris, and Mordred. But as for me, I meddle not of their matters; and for I understand they be murderers of good knights I left their company, and God would I had been by, said Gareth, when the noble knight Sir Lamorak was slain. Yea, said Sir Palamides, and so would I had been there, and that day that he was slain he did the most deeds of arms that ever I saw knight do in all my life days. And when he was given the degree by my lord Arthur, Sir Gawaine and his three brethren, Agravaine, Gaheris, and Sir Mordred, set upon Sir Lamorak in a privy place, and there they slew his horse, and so they fought with him on foot more than three hours, both before him and behind him; and Sir Mordred gave him his death's wound behind him at his back, and all to-hewed him. Fie upon treason, said Sir Tristram, for it killeth my heart to hear this tale. So doth it mine, said Gareth (Book 10, ch. 58).

*Ibid. Percivale heard the tidings* (Book 10, ch. 54).

## CHAPTER VIII

P. 78. *The madness of Sir Launcelot* (Book 11, ch. 9).

*Ibid. They found the queen their mother* (Book 11, ch. 10).

P. 80. *For spending.—Interment was made.*

She sent a squire after them with spending enough. And so when the squire had overtaken them, they would not suffer him to ride with them, but sent him home again to comfort their mother, praying her meekly for her blessing. And so this squire was benighted, and by misfortune he happened to come unto a castle where dwelled a baron. And so when the squire came into the castle, the lord asked him from whence he came, and whom he served. My lord, said the squire, I serve a good knight that is called Sir Aglovale. The squire said it to good intent, weening unto him to have been more forborne for Sir Aglovale's sake than

if he had said he had served the queen, Aglovale's mother. Well my fellow, said the lord of that castle, for Sir Aglovale's sake thou shalt have evil lodging, for Aglovale slew my brother, and therefore thou shalt die on part of payment. And then that lord commanded his men to have him away, and so pulled him out of the castle and there they slew him without mercy. Right so on the morn came Sir Aglovale and Sir Percivale riding by a church yard, where men and women were busy, and beheld the dead squire, and they thought to bury him. What is there, said Sir Aglovale, that ye behold so fast? A good man start forth and said, Fair knight, here lieth a squire slain shamefully this night. How was he slain, fair fellow? said Sir Aglovale. My fair sir, said the man, the lord of this castle lodged this squire this night, and because he said he was servant unto a good knight that is with King Arthur, his name is Sir Aglovale, therefore the lord commanded to slay him, and for this cause is he slain. Gramercy, said Sir Aglovale, and ye shall see his death revenged lightly, for I am that same knight for whom this squire was slain. Then Sir Aglovale called unto him Sir Percivale, and bad him alight lightly, and so they alight both and betook their horses to their men, and so they went on foot into the castle. And all so soon as they were within the castle gate, Sir Aglovale bad the porter Go thou unto thy lord and tell him that I am Sir Aglovale for whom this squire was slain this night. Anon the porter told this to his lord, whose name was Goodewin; anon he armed him, and then he came into the court and said, Which of you is Sir Aglovale? Here I am, said Aglovale: for what cause slewest thou this night my mother's squire? I slew him, said Sir Goodewin, because of thee; for thou slewest my brother Sir Gawdelin. As for thy brother, said Sir Aglovale, I avow it I slew him, for he was a false knight, and a betrayer of ladies and of good knights; and for the death of my squire thou shalt die I defy thee, said Sir Goodewin. Then they lashed together as eagerly as it had been two lions; and Sir Percivale fought with all the remnant that would fight. And within awhile Sir Percivale had slain all that would withstand him; for Sir Percivale dealt so his strokes that were so rude that there durst no man abide him. And within a while Sir Aglovale had Sir Goodewin at the earth, and there he unlaced his helm and strake off his head. And then they departed and took their horses. And then they let carry the squire unto a priory, and there they interred him (Book II, ch. II).

P. 89. *How the maiden came to Galahad* (Book 17, chs. 2-11).

*Ibid. Three spindles, white, green and red.*

So they went toward the bed to behold it, and above the head there hung two spindles which were as white as any snow, and other that were as red as blood, and other above green as any emerald: of these three colours were the spindles, and of natural colour within, and without any painting. These spindles, said the damsel, were when sinful Eve came to gather fruit, for which Adam and she were put out of Paradise, she took with her the bough on which the apple hung. Then perceived she that the branch was fair and green, and she remembered her the loss which came from the tree. Then she thought to keep the branch as long as she might, and she put it in the earth. So by the will of our Lord the branch grew to a great tree within a little while, and was as white as any snow, branches, boughs, and leaves, that was a token a maiden planted it. But after the tree which was white became green as any grass, and all that came out of it. And in the same time there was Abel begotten; thus was the tree long of green colour. And so it befell many days after, under the same tree Cain slew Abel, whereof befell great marvel. For anon as Abel had received the death under the green tree, it lost the green colour and became red, and that was in tokening of the blood (Book 17, ch. 5).

## CHAPTER IX

P. 92. *The night at Cardigan.*

And at the last they came to a castle that hight Cardican, and there Sir Percivale and Sir Aglovale were lodged together, and privily about midnight Sir Percivale came to Aglovale's squire, and said, Arise and make thee ready, for ye and I will ride away secretly. Sir, said the squire, I would full fain ride with you where ye would have me, but, and my lord your brother take me, he will slay me. As for that care thou not, for I shall be thy warrant (Book 11, ch. 12).

## CHAPTER X

P. 98. *He came to a bridge of stone* (Book 11, ch. 12).

## CHAPTER XI

P. 107. *Sir Persides.*

And so Sir Persides rode unto King Arthur, and told there of Sir Percivale. And when Sir Aglovale heard him speak of his brother Sir Percivale, he said, He departed from me unkindly. Sir, said Sir Persides, on my life he shall prove a noble knight as any now is living. And when he saw Sir Kay and Sir Mordred, Sir Persides said thus : My fair lords both, Sir Percivale greeteth you well both, and he sent you word by me that he trusteth to God or ever he come to the court again to be of as great nobleness as ever were ye both, and more men to speak of his nobleness than ever they did you. It may well be, said Sir Kay and Sir Mordred, but at that time when he was made knight he was full unlikely to prove a good knight. As for that, said King Arthur, he must needs prove a good knight, for his father and his brethren were noble knights (Book 11, ch. 12).

P. 111. *Sir Ector came upon him* (Book 11, chs. 13, 14).P. 112. *She gave away her life.*

So they came to a castle, and there came a knight and said, Lords, hark what I shall say unto you. This gentlewoman that you lead with you is a maid? Sir, said she, a maid I am. Then he took her by the bridle, and meanwhile there came out a ten or twelve knights armed, out of the castle, and with them came gentlewomen which held a dish of silver, and then they said, This gentlewoman must yield us the custom of this castle. Sir, said a knight, what maid passeth hereby shall give this dish full of blood of her right arm. Blame have ye, said Galahad, that brought up such customs, and I ensure you of this gentlewoman ye shall fail while that I live. Truly, said Sir Percivale, I had lever be slain. And I also, said Sir Bors. For God's love, said the gentlewoman, go thither and spare not for me. So the three knights asked the custom of the castle and wherefore it was. What it is, said they, we will say you sooth. There is in this castle a gentlewoman which we and this castle is hers. So it befell many years ago there fell upon her a malady. And when she had lain a great while she fell into a measle, and of no leech she could have no remedy. But at last an old man said, and she might have a dish full of blood of a maid and a clean virgin in will and in work, and a king's daughter,

that blood should be her health, and for to anoint her withal : and for this thing was this custom made. Now, said Percivale's sister, fair knights, I see well that this gentlewoman is but dead. Certes, said Galahad, and if ye bleed so much ye may die. Truly, said she, and I die for to heal her, I shall get me great worship and soul's health, and worship to my lineage, and better is one harm than twain. And therefore there shall be no more battle, but to-morn I shall yield you your custom of this castle. And she would none other whether they would or nold. And on the morn they heard mass, and Sir Percivale's sister bad bring forth the sick lady. So she was, the which was evil at ease. Then said she, Who shall let me blood? So one came forth and let her blood, and she bled so much that the dish was full. Then she lift up her hand and blessed her. And then she said to the lady, Madam, I am come to the death, for to make you whole ; for God's love pray for me. With that she fell in a swoon. Then Galahad and his two fellows start up to her, and lift her up, and stanchd her, but she had bled so much that she might not live. Then asked she her Saviour, and so soon as she had received Him the soul departed from the body (Book 17, chs. 10, 11).

## CHAPTER XIII

- P. 126. *As she was hawking by the water* (Book 12, ch. 7).  
P. 127. *As he rode in a forest* (Book 11, chs. 13, 14).  
P. 130. *Alone she came to Camelot* (Book 13, ch. 5).  
Ibid. *He came late to Camelot* (Book 13, ch. 8).

## CHAPTER XIV

- P. 139. *When young Sir Galahad broke spears* (Book 13, ch. 6).  
P. 141. *The thunder of miracle broke* (Book 13, ch. 7).  
P. 142. *The tomb of Lot* (Book 2, ch. 11).  
P. 148. *A Queen recluse* (Book 14, ch. 1).  
P. 151. *The tomb of Naciens* (Book 13, ch. 11).  
Ibid. *Sir Pinel le Savage* (Book 18, ch. 3).  
P. 152. *Came she with the two wicked queens* (Book 21, chs. 5, 6).



## CHAPTER XVI

P. 171. *In the city of Sarras.*

There the king was a tyrant, and was come of the line of paynims, and took them, and put them in prison in a deep hole. But as soon as they were there, our Lord sent them the Sancgreal, through whose grace they were alway fulfilled while that they were in prison. So at the year's end it befell that this king Estorause lay sick and felt that he should die. Then he sent for the three knights, and they came afore him, and he cried them mercy of that he had done to them, and they forgave it him goodly, and he died anon. When the king was dead all the city was dismayed, and wist not who might be their king. Right so there came a voice among them, and bad them choose the youngest knight of them three to be their king. So they made Galahad king by all the assent of the whole city, and else they would have slain him (Book 17, ch. 22).

## CHAPTER XVII

P. 173. *Sir Breuse Saunce Pitt* (Book 9, ch. 26 ; Book 10, chs. 1, 25, 35, 65).

P. 174. *A trick* (Book 10, ch. 53).

Ibid. *Sir Bertelot the one-handed* (Book 12, ch. 2).

P. 180. *Him Gawaine slew* (Book 16, ch. 2).

Ibid. *King Bagdemagus* (Book 17, ch. 17).

Ibid. *Gawaine slew.*

And then he told the hermit how a monk called me wicked knight. He might well say it, said the hermit. For certes, had ye not been so wicked as ye are, never had the seven brethren been slain by you and your two fellows. For Sir Galahad, himself alone, beat them all seven the day before, but his living is such he shall slay no man lightly (Book 13, ch. 16). Said the good man, The adventure of the Sancgreal which ye have undertaken, marvel not though ye fail thereof, and many other. For ye be an untrue knight and a great murderer. For I dare say, as sinful as Sir Launcelot hath been, sith that he went into the quest of the

Sancgreal he slew never man, nor naught shall till he come unto Camelot again. For he hath taken upon him to forsake sin (Book 16, ch. 5).

P. 180. *Sailed the seas with Galahad* (Book 17, ch. 13).

## CHAPTER XX

P. 202. *Sir Bors returned* (Book 17, ch. 23).

*Ibid. How the Quest was achieved* (Book 17).

P. 203. *For he abandoned his brother.*

So he met two knights that led Lionel his brother all naked, bounden upon a strong hackney, and his hands bounden tofore his breast: and every each of them held in his hand thorns, wherewith they went beating him so sore that the blood trailed down more than in an hundred places of his body, so that he was all blood tofore and behind, but he said never a word, as he which was great of heart; he suffered all that ever they did to him as though he had felt none anguish. Anon Sir Bors saw a knight which brought a fair gentlewoman, and would have set her in the thickest place of the forest. And she cried with an high voice, Saint Mary, succour your maid! And anon she espied Sir Bors, and she conjured him, by the faith that he owed unto Him in whose service thou art entered in, and for the faith ye owe unto the high order of knighthood, and for the noble king Arthur's sake, that I suppose that made thee knight, that thou help me and suffer me not to be shamed of this knight!

When Bors heard her says thus, he had so much sorrow there he nist not what to do. For if I let my brother be in adventure he must be slain, and that would I not for all the earth. And if I help not the maid, she is shamed for ever, and also she shall lose her honour, the which she shall never get again. Then lift he up his eyes, and said weeping, Fair sweet Lord Jesu Christ whose liege man I am, keep Lionel my brother that these knights slay him not; and for pity of you, and for Mary's sake, I shall succour this maid (Book 16, ch. 9).

P. 204. *A voice bade him go seek Sir Percivale* (Book 16, ch. 17).

*Ibid. How he was tempted.*

Also he drank the strongest wine that ever he drank, and therewith he was a little heated more than he ought to be. With

that he beheld the gentlewoman, and him thought that she was the fairest creature that ever he saw. And then Sir Percivale proffered her love, and she refused him in a manner, for the cause that he should be more ardent on her. And when she saw him well enchafed, then she said, Sir Percivale, I shall not fulfil your will, but if ye swear from henceforth ye shall be my true servant will ye ensure me this as ye be a true knight? Yea, said he, fair lady, by the faith of my body. Well, said she, now shall ye be with me what so it please you. And then Sir Percivale came near to her, to proffer her love, and by adventure and grace he saw his sword lie upon the ground all naked, in whose pommel was a red cross, and the sign of the crucifix therein, and bethought him on his knighthood, and his promise. Then he made the sign of the cross in his forehead, and therewith the pavilion turned upside so down, and then it changed unto a smoke and a black cloud and then he was adread, and cried aloud, Fair sweet Father Jesu Christ, ne let me not be shamed, the which was near lost had not thy good grace been! And then he looked into a ship and saw her enter therein, which said, Sir Percivale, ye have betrayed me. And so she went with the wind roaring and yelling that it seemed that all the water burnt after her. Then Sir Percivale made great sorrow, and drew his sword unto him, saying, Sithen my flesh will be my master I shall punish it. And therewith he rove himself through the thigh, that the blood started about him, and said, O good Lord, take this in recompensation of that I have done against thee, my Lord. So then he clothed himself and armed him, and called himself a wretch, saying, How nigh was I lost, and to have lost that I should never have gotten again that was my virginity, for that may never be recovered after it is once lost. Thus as he made his moan, he saw the good man and he went unto him weakly, and there he told him altogether. Knew ye not the maid? said the good man. Sir, said he, nay but well I wot the fiend sent her hither to shame me. Oh good knight, said he, thou art a fool, for that gentlewoman was the master fiend of hell, the which had overcome thee, had not the grace of God been (Book 14, chs. 9, 10).

## CHAPTER XXI

P. 209. *The tale of the empoisoned apples* (Book 18, chs. 3-8).  
 Ibid. *Meliagraunce* (Book 19).

## CHAPTER XXIII

P. 241. *Sir Urre* (Book 19, chs. 10-12).

P. 244. *Felelolie* (Book 19, ch. 13).

## CHAPTER XXIV

P. 247. *The piteous story* (Book 20).

Ibid. *Fondly pretending*.

For as the French book saith, the king was full loth thereto, that any noise should be upon Sir Launcelot and his queen ; for the king had a deeming, but he would not hear of it, for Sir Launcelot had done so much for him and for the queen so many times, that, wit ye well the king loved him passingly well (Book 20, ch. 2).

P. 248. *Sir Bors awaiting Sir Launcelot's return* (Book 20, ch. 5).

P. 254. *Gawaine had refused* (Ch. 8).

## CHAPTER XXV

P. 259. *Gawaine cried me thus*.

Then spake Sir Gawaine and said : My Lord Arthur, I would counsel you not to be over hasty, but that ye would put it in respite, this judgment of my lady the queen, for many causes. One it is, though it were so that Sir Launcelot were found in the queen's chamber, yet it might be he came thither for none evil, for ye know, my lord, said Gawaine, that the queen is much beholden unto Sir Launcelot, more than unto any other knight, for oft-times he hath saved her life, and done battle for her when all the court refused the queen, and, peradventure, she sent for him for goodness and for none evil, to reward him for his good deeds that he hath done to her in time past. And, peradventure, my lady the queen sent for him to that intent that Sir Launcelot should come to her good grace privily and secretly, weening to her that it was best so to do in eschewing and dreading of slander. For oft-times we do many things that we ween it to be for the best, and yet, peradventure, it turneth to the worst. For I dare say, said Sir Gawaine, that my lady your queen is to you both good and true. And as for Sir Launcelot, said Sir Gawaine, I dare say he will make it good upon any knight living that will put upon himself villainy or shame, and

in likewise he will make good for my lady dame Guenever. That I believe well, said King Arthur, but I will not that way with Sir Launcelot, for he trusteth so much upon his hands and his might that he doubteth no man, and therefore for my queen he shall never fight more, for she shall have the law. And if I may get Sir Launcelot, wit ye well he shall have a shameful death. Jesu defend, said Sir Gawaine, that I may never see it (Book 20, ch. 7).

P. 261. *Of incest.*

Thither came to him Lot's wife of Orkney, in manner of a messenger; and she came richly beseen with her four sons, Gawaine, Gaheris, Agravaine and Gareth, with many other knights and ladies, and she was a passing fair lady, wherefore the king cast great love unto her, and they were agreed, and she was his sister on the mother side Igraine. So there she rested her a month, and at the last departed. Then the king dreamed a marvellous dream whereof he was sore adread. But all this time King Arthur knew not that King Lot's wife was his sister. Thus was the dream of Arthur. Him thought that there was come into this land griffons and serpents, and him thought they hunt and slew all the people in the land, and then him thought he fought with them, and they did him passing great harm and wounded him full sore, but at last he slew them. When the king awaked he was passing heavy of his dream (Book 1, ch. 17). Then said the old man, Ye have done a thing late that God is displeased with you, and your sister shall have a child that shall destroy you and all the knights of your realm. What are ye, said Arthur, that tell me these tidings? I am Merlin. Ah, said King Arthur, ye are a marvellous man, but I marvel much of thy words that I must die in battle. Marvel not, said Merlin, for it is God's will your body to be punished for your foul deeds (Book 1, ch. 18).

Ibid. *A horrid deed.*

Then King Arthur let send for all the children born on May-day of lords and ladies, for Merlin told King Arthur that he that should destroy him should be born on May-day, wherefore he sent for them all upon pain of death. And so there were found many lords' sons, and all were sent unto the king, and so was Mordred sent by King Lot's wife, and all were put in a ship to the sea, and some were four weeks old and some less. And so by fortune the ship drove unto a castle, and was all to-riven and destroyed the most part, save that Mordred was cast up, and a good man found him and nourished him until he was fourteen year old, and then

he brought him to the court. So many lords and barons of this realm were displeased, for their children were so lost (Book 1, ch. 25).

P. 261. *King Lot against him.*

King Lot that of late time afore had been a knight of King Arthur's, and wedded the sister of King Arthur, and for the wrong King Arthur did him, therefore King Lot held against Arthur (Book 2, ch. 10).

Ibid. *The gift King Leodegrance sent.*

That is to me, said King Leodegrance, the best tidings that ever I heard, that so worthy a king of prowess and noblesse will wed my daughter. And as for my lands I will give him wist I it might please him, but he hath lands enough, him needeth none, but I shall send him a gift shall please him much more, for I shall give him the Table Round, the which Uther Pendragon gave me, and when it is full complete there is an hundred knights and fifty. And as for a hundred good knights I have myself, but I lack fifty, for so many have been slain in my days. And so King Leodegrance delivered his daughter Guenever unto Merlin, and the Table Round, with the hundred knights, and so they rode freshly, with great royalty, what by water and what by land, till they were come nigh unto London.

When King Arthur heard of the coming of Guenever and the hundred knights with the Table Round, then King Arthur made great joy of their coming, and that rich present, and said openly, This fair lady is passing welcome unto me, for I have loved her long, and therefore there is nothing so lief to me. And these knights with the Round Table please me more than right great riches (Book 3, chs. 1, 2).

P. 262. *Whether verily he slew King Lot.*


So there was a knight called Pellinore, the which was a good man of prowess, and he smote a mighty stroke at King Lot as he fought with all his enemies, and he failed of his stroke and he smote the horse's neck, that he fell to the ground with King Lot ; and therewith anon Sir Pellinore smote him a great stroke through the helm and head unto the brows. And then all the host of Orkney fled for the death of King Lot ; and there were slain many mothers' sons. But King Pellinore bare the blame for the death of King Lot (Book 2, ch. 10). My father slew not your father ; it was Balan le Savage (Book 10, ch. 24).

## CHAPTER XXVIII

P. 277. *Unhappy Guenever.*

Then the queen was led forth without Carlisle, and there she was despoiled into her smock. And so then her ghostly father was brought to her, to be shriven of her misdeeds. Then was there weeping and wailing and wringing of hands of many lords and ladies. Then was there one that Sir Launcelot had sent unto that place for to espy what time the queen should go to her death. And anon, as he saw the queen despoiled into her smock, and so shriven, then he gave Sir Launcelot warning. Then was there but spurring and plucking up of horses, and right so they came to the fire, and who that stood against them, there they were slain, there might none withstand Sir Launcelot, so all that bare arms and withstood them, there were they slain—full many a noble knight. For there was slain Sir Belias le Orgulous, Sir Segwarides, Sir Griflet, Sir Brandiles, Sir Aglovale, Sir Tor, Sir Gauter, Sir Gillimer, Sir Reynold, three brethren, Sir Damas, Sir Priamus, Sir Kay the stranger, Sir Driant, Sir Lambegus, Sir Herminde, Sir Pertilope, Sir Perimones, two brethren that were called the green knight and the red knight. And so in the rashing and hurling as Sir Launcelot thrang here and there, it mishapped him to slay Gaheris and Sir Gareth, the noble knight, for they were unarmed and unaware for, as the French book saith, Sir Launcelot smote Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris upon the brain-pans, where through they were slain in the field, howbeit in very truth Sir Launcelot saw them not, and so were they found dead in the thickest of the press. Then when Sir Launcelot had thus done and slain, and put to flight all that would withstand him, then he rode straight unto dame Guenever and made a kirtle and a gown to be cast upon her, and then he made her to be set behind him, and prayed her to be of good cheer. Wit you well the queen was glad that she was escaped from the death, and then she thanked God and Sir Launcelot. And so he rode his way with the queen unto Joyous Gard (Book 20, ch. 8).

P. 287. *Extreme haste* (Book 20, ch. 10).



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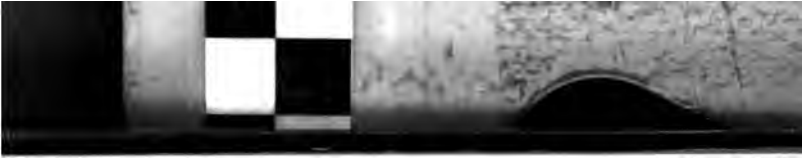
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